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BY

MRS. OLIPHANT

AUTHOR OF 'THE SECOND SON,' 'A COUNTRY GENTLEMAN,'
'THE WIZARD'S SON,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

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CHAPTER I

It was a coming of age, and yet not a coming of age. The hero in honour of whom all these festivities were, was a bearded man, who had been absent in all sorts of dangerous places since the moment when he was supposed formally to have ended the state of pupilage. That had been later than common, since the will of his uncle, whom he had succeeded, had stipulated that he was to come of age at twenty-five. He was nearer thirty when he came home, bearded as has been said, bronzed, with decorations upon his breast, and a character quite unlike that of the young hero to whom such honours are usually paid. His position altogether was a peculiar one. The estates of the family were not entailed, and Mr. Bellendean of Bellendean, the uncle, had passed over his

own brother, who was still living, and left everything to his nephew ; so that Norman was in the peculiar position of being received by his father and mother in a house which was not theirs but his, and of standing in the place of the head of the family, while the natural head of his own branch of the family was put aside. The character of the people made this as little embarrassing as it was possible for such a false position to be, but still it was not easy ; and as the young man was full of delicate feeling and susceptibility, notwithstanding an acquaintance with the world unusual in his circumstances, he had looked forward to it with some apprehension. Perhaps it would be wiser to say that he thought he was acquainted with the world. He had been 'knocking about' for the last ten years, seeing all the service that was to be seen, and making acquaintance with various quarters of the globe. He thought he knew men and life. In reality he knew a little of Scotland, a great deal of India, and had a trifling acquaintance with some of the colonies ; but of London, Paris, all the capitals that count for anything, and all the

life that counts for anything, he was as ignorant as a child.

This combination is one which was not at all unusual in Scotland a generation since, and produced a kind of character full of attraction, the most piquant mixture of experience and ignorance, of simplicity and knowledge, that can be conceived. A man who had an eye as keen as lightning for the wiles of an Eastern, were he prince or slave, but could be taken in with the most delightful ease by the first cab-driver in the streets; who could hold his own before a durbar of astute oriental politicians, but was at the mercy of the first flower-girl who offered him a rosebud for his button-hole, or *gamin* who held his horse. He had the defects as well as the virtues common to a dominant race, and probably was imperious and exacting in the sphere which he knew best; but this tendency was completely neutralised by the confusion which arose in his mind from the fact of finding himself suddenly among a population entirely made up of this dominant race, to whom he could be nothing but polite, whatever their condition might be. He was

very polite and friendly to the railway porters, to all the people he encountered on the journey home, and reluctant to give trouble to the pretty fair chambermaids at the hotels, or to pass without inquiring into their story, the women who begged or sold trifles on the streets. 'A respectable-looking woman, and English by her accent,' he would say. 'We must stop and inquire into it. There must be a reason, you know.' 'Oh yes; probably there's a reason. Come along, or you'll have all the vagrants at your heels,' his more experienced companion would reply. They had thus a little difficulty in getting him safely through the streets at his first arrival. Home was strange to him; it was a place where all the men were honest and all the women true. He was ready to believe everything that was said to him in the new England which somehow was so unlike the old which he had seen only in passing so long ago.

The party he had brought with him consisted of two or three brother officers, unnecessary to dwell upon here; an older friend, Colonel Hayward, whom he had known very well and served under, and who had now retired from

the service, who joined young Bellendean in Edinburgh, being already in the North ; and a young man about town called Essex, who had made a tour in India a year before, and was very willing to repay the kindness shown him then by taking care of his military friend and steering him through the dangers of London. Essex, who had a mild handle to his name, and was Sir Harry, would have liked to prolong the period of his tutorship, and lead his young soldier about into pleasures and wonders unknown. But the claims of Bellendean and the great festivities concerted there were supreme. It was thus a party of four or five young men, chaperoned, if the word is applicable, by the *vieux moustache*, the steady old soldier, as ready for a frolic as any of them, who was yet, as he assured them, old enough to be their father, who arrived at the Bellendean station, where flags were flying, and the militia band blaring forth its welcome, and a body of mounted farmers waiting to escort their landlord to his paternal halls. For Bellendean it was a very fine reception indeed ; and Norman himself, being of a simple mind, was much impressed. If

the others laughed a little, that was partly, no doubt, because they were by no means the heroes of the day, and because, in the eagerness about 'the Ca'aptain,' the desire to identify him, and the disdainful indifference shown to everything that was not he, these gentlemen were thrown into the background, where they grinned and looked on. Colonel Hayward, however, was as much impressed and still more delighted than Norman. He would have liked to shake hands with all the tenantry as he did with Mr. Bellendean the father, and assure them all that 'there could not be a finer fellow;' and when they raised a cheer as the carriage drove off, joined in it lustily, with a sense of being at once a spectator yet an actor in the scene which it was delightful to see.

Bellendean was a handsome house, of no particular age or pretensions, not very far from Edinburgh. That the beautiful town was indeed visible from various points in the park, which, on the other hand, commanded a view of the Firth and the low hills of Fife, at the point where the great estuary closes in, and with a peaceful little island in mid-stream,

and a ruin or two on the margin of the water, forms that tranquil basin, in which, driven by storms of wind and storms of nations, the Athelings, pious folk, the Confessor's kindred—not strong enough by themselves to hold head against fierce Normans and Saxons any more than against the wild tides of the Northern Ocean!—once found a refuge. The rich and mellow landscape, brightened with vast rolling fields of corn and ripening orchards, startled the visitors from India, whose ideas of Scotland were all Highland; but increased their respect for their lucky comrade, of whom they had been accustomed to think that his estate was some little patrimony among the mountains, where there might indeed be grouse and perhaps deer to make poverty sweet, but nothing more profitable. The Lowland landscape lay under a flood of afternoon light. The roads were populous with passengers,—there were groups of ladies in front of the house, on the terrace to which the long windows opened: a beautiful park and fine trees, and all the evidences of that large life which a country potentate leads in what our fathers called his 'seat.' Every-

thing was wealthy, almost splendid ; Bellendean himself felt a certain awe as he looked upon all this which was his own. He remembered everything keenly, and yet it had not seemed to him so great, so imposing in his recollection as it was in reality. He had remembered his own favourite haunts, which were not the most important features in the scene. He turned to his father with a curious shyness and embarrassment. 'I had forgotten what a fine place it was,' he said ; but his eyes said something else, which natural reserve and the presence of strangers kept from his lips. What his eyes said was — 'Pardon ! that it should not be yours but mine.'

'It is a fine place,' said Mr. Bellendean. 'The places we have known only in youth are apt to look diminished when we come back. I am glad it has not that effect on you. All the same, my dear boy, I am glad it is you and not I that have to live in it. Neither my wife nor I care much for Bellendean.'

At this Norman grasped his father's hand, and said, 'You are very good, sir,' in

a way which much perplexed his excellent Colonel, who did not understand wherein the virtue lay, and who was further stricken dumb by the next question. 'In the confusion and excitement of seeing you again, I believe I have not asked for Mrs. Bellendean?'

The reader is too experienced not to perceive that this question, which bewildered Colonel Hayward, conveyed the not very extraordinary fact that Norman had a stepmother, which was one of the chief reasons of his long absence. Not that Mrs. Bellendean was a harsh or cruel stepmother, or one of those spoilers of domestic peace who flourish in literature under that title; but only that the young man remembered his mother, and could ill bear to see another in her place. She stood on the steps of the great door at this moment, awaiting the carriage—a woman not more than forty, tall and fair, dressed a little more soberly than her age required, but full of youth and animation in look and figure. A number of ladies stood behind her, some of them 'as pretty creatures as ever I saw,' the Colonel said to himself, cousins of all degrees,

old playfellows, old friends. The *vieux moustache* stood by while these pleasant spectators surged about young Bellendean. He stood aside, and made his remarks. 'I shouldn't wonder now if he might marry any one of them,' he said to himself. 'Lucky fellow. I shouldn't wonder now if they were all waiting till he throws the handkerchief. Talk about sultans! all those pretty English—no, they are Scotch—girls: and he could have any one of them!' The Colonel sighed at the thought. He belonged himself to an age in which statistics had no place, before it was known that there was a million or so of superfluous women, and being a chivalrous soul he did not like it. He was much pleased to discover afterwards that several of the young ladies were married, and so out of the competition. But it was a pretty sight.

After this the days were tolerably well filled. There was a dinner to the neighbouring gentry, and a dinner to the tenantry. There was a ball. There was a great supper in tents to the labourers and cottagers on the estate; finally, there was a vast entertainment

for the school children in the united parishes of Bellendean and Prince's Ferry. The Colonel went through them all manfully. He carried out his original impulse, shook hands with everybody, and said, 'I assure you he's a capital fellow.' 'I had him under my command at So-and-so, and So-and-so, and I know what's in him.' In this way Colonel Hayward was himself a great success. The old county neighbours liked the assurance he gave them, and the farmers delighted in it. And when it came to the turn of the masses, and the old soldier went about among the tables at the labourers' supper, repeating his formula, the enthusiasm was immense. 'Eh, Cornel, but that's a real satisfaction,' the old men said. 'Sae lang as he's done his duty, what can mortal man do mair?' His own assurances and reassurances went to the good Colonel's head. He felt like a trumpeter whose note was the word of command to everybody, and marched about with his head high. 'I assure you he's a capital fellow, a capital fell——' He was in the very act of repeating them, when the words seemed to fail him all at once. He stopped in the

middle with his mouth open, and gazed at some one who at that moment for the first time caught his eye.

Was it because her place did not seem to be there? A girl of twenty or so—tall, slight, her figure like a lily-stalk slightly swaying forward, her head raised, with a tremor of sympathy in every feature. Her face was like a lily too, pale, with large eyes, either brown or blue, he could not be sure which, and long eyelashes uplifted; and the most sensitive mouth, which smiled yet quivered, and made as though repeating the words, which the eyes seemed to divine before they were said. She was seated at the end of a table with two old people, too old to be her father and mother, looking as if she had strayed there by some strange chance, as if she had nothing to do with the vulgar features of the feast, like a young princess who had sat down among them to please them. The words were stopped upon the Colonel's lips. He broke down in the middle, and stood staring at her, not knowing where he was. Good Lord! that face: and sitting there among the common

people, among the labourers, the ploughmen ! It did not seem to Colonel Hayward that anybody about was surprised at his stare. They, too, turned round and looked at her kindly, or—not kindly, as the case might be. But they were not surprised. They understood his wonder. ‘Ay, sir, she’s a very bonnie lass,’ said one old man. ‘A bonnie lass! a bonnie lass!’ the Colonel repeated ; but not with the tone in which he had spoken about the capital fellow. It was as if some blow had been struck at him which took away his utterance. He hurried up to Mrs. Bellendean, who stood at the head of the tent looking on. ‘A young lady, my dear Colonel? there are no young ladies there.’ ‘You must know her if I could but point her out to you. She is like no one else about her. It is not curiosity. I have a particular reason for asking.’ ‘Tell me what she was like,’ the gracious lady said ; but just then her husband came to consult her about something, and the opportunity was lost.

Colonel Hayward retired from his trumpeting for that night. He let Norman’s

reputation take its chance. He was very silent all the rest of the evening, not even repeating his question when he had an opportunity, but sitting by himself and thinking it over. It was a remarkable face : but no doubt the resemblance must be a chance resemblance. There are so many faces in the world, and some of them here and there must resemble each other. It must be something in his own mind, some recollection that had come to him unawares, an association from the Scotch voices he heard round him. That, when he came to think of it, must have been working in his mind all day ; indeed, ever since he came. And this was the issue. Every mental process (people say) can be explained if you trace it out. And this one was not so difficult after all, not difficult at all, when you came to think of it, he said to himself, nodding his head ; but all the same, he could not help wishing that Elizabeth had been here. And then he began to think again of that girl. She was not like a girl to be found sitting with the ploughmen's families. He seemed to see her before him, especially when he shut his eyes and gave himself up

to it, which he did in a retired corner on the terrace after everybody had gone away. Though it was late, there was still light in the skies, partly the lingering northern daylight, partly the moon, and he shut his eyes while he smoked his cigar and pondered. He could see her before him, that girl, in a dark dress made (he thought—but then he did not know much about it) like a lady's—certainly with a face like a lady's, or how could she have resembled——? Of course, it was only association, and the recollections that came back to him with those Lowland voices. The Highland ones had never affected him in the same way. The fact was, he said to himself, he was never half a man when Elizabeth was not with him. She would have understood the sequence of ideas at once. She would have found out in five minutes who the girl was and all about her, and set him at rest. He was interrupted in those thoughts by the sudden irruption of the band of young men with their cigars into the balmy quiet of the night. It was warm, and they had found the smoking-room hot. 'And there is old Hayward gone

to sleep in a corner,' he heard one of them say.

'He must not sleep,' said Mr. Bellendean ; 'wake him up, Norman. The air here is too keen for that.'

'I am no more asleep than any one of you young fellows,' the Colonel said, jumping up. 'But as old Hayward has more sense than a set of boys, he kept outside here in the cool while you were all heating yourselves in the smoking-room. I don't think they've got the best of it this time, Mr. Bellendean, eh?'

'They don't half so often as they think,' said the other old gentleman. They were neither of them very old, but they drew together with a natural sympathy amid that band of youth.

Next day was the concluding day of the Bellendean festivities, and it was chiefly to be devoted to the children. In the afternoon the park was turned into an immense playground. Every kind of game and entertainment that could be thought of was provided. There was a conjurer, there was Punch, there was a man with marionnettes,

and what the children liked still better, there were games of all kinds, in which they could themselves perform, which is always more agreeable than seeing other people do so. And finally, there was tea—a wonderful tea, in which mountains of cake and cookies innumerable disappeared like magic. The ladies were all there, serving actively the flushed and happy crowds of children, throwing themselves into it with much more sympathy than they had shown with the substantial feasts of the previous days. The young men were set free, they were not required to help in the entertainment of the boys and girls; and except Norman, who had bravely determined to do his duty to the end, the male portion of the company was represented only by Mr. Bellendean and the Colonel, who looked on from the terrace, and finally took a walk round the tent where the meal was going on, and partook, as the newspapers say, of a cup of tea at a little separate table in a corner, where Mrs. Bellendean was taking that refreshment. It was when the Colonel (who liked his tea) was standing with a cup in his hand, just outside the great

tent, which was steaming with the entertainment, that he suddenly stopped once more in the midst of a little speech he was making about the pleasure of seeing children enjoy themselves. He stopped with a little start, and then he set down his cup and turned back to watch something. It was afternoon, but the sun was still high in the skies, and even under the tent there was full daylight, impaired by no shadows or uncertainty. The shade within gave a suppressed and yellow glow to everything, something like the air of a theatre: and in the midst there she stood once more, the girl of last night! The Colonel gazed at her with an absorption, an abstraction, which was extraordinary. He saw nothing but only her alone. She had been seated by the old ploughman on the previous night as if she belonged to him; but now she was moving about among the children as the young ladies were doing, serving and encouraging: her dress was very simple, but so was theirs, and there was not one of them more graceful, more at her ease. Everybody knew her. She seemed to be referred to on all hands; by the children,

who came clinging about her—by the visitors, who seemed to consult her upon everything. Who could she be? The clergyman's daughter perhaps; but then, how had she come to be seated last night between the old couple, who were clearly labouring people, at the cottagers' supper? And how had she come by that face? Whoever she might be, gentlewoman or rustic maiden, how had she come by that face? There was the wonder.

The Colonel stood fascinated, immovable, at the tent-door, looking in, seeing all the moving crowd of faces only as a background to this one, which seemed, in his fancy, to reign over them all. Her face was not still and attentive, as on the previous night, but full of animation and life. He watched the children come round her as they finished their meal, which was pretty to see; he watched the ladies coming and going, always circling more or less about this one figure. He watched Norman going up to her, holding out his hand, which she took, showing for the first time a little rustic shyness, curtsying as if he had been a prince.

Then he saw a quite different sort of man from Norman, one of the schoolmasters, go to her in his turn and say something in her ear, with an evident claim upon her attention and a lingering touch on her arm, which spoke much, which made the Colonel angry, as if the fellow had presumed. But the girl evidently did not think he presumed. A smile lighted up her face, which she turned to him looking up in his. Colonel Hayward felt a movement of impatience take possession of him : and then a still stronger feeling swept across his mind. As she turned her face with that look of tender attention to the man who addressed her, she turned it also to the spectator looking at her from the tent-door. The line of the uplifted head, the soft chin, the white throat, the eyes raised with their long eyelashes—‘Good God! who is she?’ he said aloud.

Mrs. Bellendean saw the absorbed expression in his face, and came and stood beside him to see what he was looking at. Her own face relaxed into smiles when she found out the object of his gaze. ‘Oh, I

don't wonder now at your interest, Colonel. I am sure she has had no tea ; she would never think of looking after herself. Now, come, you shall see her nearer ; she is worth looking at : Joyce !' she cried.

‘Joyce! Good God!’

CHAPTER II

COLONEL HAYWARD sank down upon a bench which stood close to the tent-door. The light swam in his eyes. He saw only as through a mist the light figure advancing, standing docile and obedient by the side of the great lady. The name completed the extraordinary impression which the looks had made ; he kept saying it over to himself under his breath in his bewilderment. 'Joyce! Good Lord!' But presently the urgency of the circumstances brought him to himself. He breathed in his soul a secret desire for Elizabeth : then manned himself to act on his own behalf, since no better could be.

'This is the very best girl in the world, Colonel Hayward,' said Mrs. Bellendean, with a hand upon Joyce's shoulder. 'I don't wonder she interested you. She has taught

herself every sort of thing—Latin and mathematics, and I don't know all what. Our school is always at the head in all the examinations, and she really raises quite an enthusiasm among the children. I don't know what we should do without her. Whenever we come here, Joyce is my right hand, and has been since she was quite a child.

If it was condescension, it was of the most gracious kind. Mrs. Bellendean kept patting Joyce on the shoulder as she spoke, with a caressing touch : and her eyes and her voice were both soft. The girl responded with a look full of tenderness and pleasure. 'Oh mem, it is you who are always so good to me,' she said.

The schoolmistress then ! That was how the ploughman's daughter had got her superior look. When he saw her closer, he thought he saw (enlightened by this knowledge) that it was only a superior look, not the aspect of a lady as he had supposed. Her dress had not the dainty perfection of the young ladies' dresses ; her hands were not delicate like theirs : and she said 'mem' to her patroness with an accent which—— Ah !

but what did that accent remind him of? and the face? and, good heavens! the name? These criticisms passed like a cloud across his mind; the bewilderment and anxiety remained. He rose up from the bench, nobody having thought anything of his sudden subsidence, except that perhaps the old Colonel was tired with standing about. Oh that Elizabeth had been here! but in her absence he must do what he could for himself.

‘Young lady,’ he said, ‘would you tell me how you got your name? It is a very uncommon name: and your face is not a common face,’ he added, with nervous haste. ‘I knew some one once——’

His voice seemed to go away from him into his throat. It was curious to see him, at his age, so unsteady and agitated, swaying from one foot to another, stammering, flushing under the limpid modest eyes of this country girl, who, on her part, coloured suddenly, looked at him, and then at Mrs. Bellendean, with a faint cry, ‘Oh, sir!’

‘Where she got her name?’ said Mrs. Bellendean. ‘It is not so easily answered as perhaps you think. I will tell you afterwards.

It *is* a very uncommon name. Joyce, my dear, what is the little secret you have been plotting, and when is it to be made known ?'

The young woman stood for a moment without replying. 'How can I help wondering?' she said, with a long-drawn breath. 'How can I think of common things? Nobody has ever asked me that question before.' Then, with a sudden effort, she recovered her self-control. 'It will be nothing,' she said quickly, as if to herself; 'it will be some fancy: I'll go back to my work. It was no secret worth calling a secret, Mrs. Bellendean—only some poems they learned to please me—to say to you and the other ladies, if you will take your seats.'

'Where would you like us to take our seats, Joyce?'

'Yonder, under the big ash tree. It's very bonnie there. You can see the Firth, and the ships sailing, and St. Margaret's Hope; and you will look like the Queen herself, with her ladies, under the green canopy. Will I put the chair for you?' cried the girl, in a Scotch confusion of verbs. She gave the Colonel one glance, and then hurried off, as

if determined to distract her own attention. There were a few garden-chairs already scattered about under a clump of trees, which crowned a little platform of green—a very slight eminence, just enough to serve as a dais. She drew them into place with a rapid and cunning hand, and caught quickly at a Turkish rug of brilliant colour, which lay beside the tea-table, placing it in front of the presiding chair. Her movements were very swift and certain, and full of the grace of activity and capacity. Meantime the Colonel stood by the side of Mrs. Bellendean, surveying all.

‘She is excited,’ said the lady. ‘She is a strange girl: your question—which I have no doubt is a very simple question—has set her imagination going. See what a picture she has made! And she could sketch it, too, if there was time. She is a sort of universal genius. And now she is all on fire, hoping to find out something.’

‘Hoping to find out—what?’

‘Oh, my dear Colonel, it is a long story. I will tell you afterwards—not a word more now, please. I don’t want her to form

expectations, poor girl—— Well, Joyce—is that where I am to sit? I shall feel quite like the Queen——’

‘With the young ladies behind,’ said Joyce, breathless. Her eyes were full of impatient light, her sensitive lips quivering even while they smiled—a rapid coming and going of expression, of movement and colour, in her usually pale face. The Colonel stood gazing at her, his mouth slightly open, his eyes fixed. Oh, if Elizabeth were but here, who would know what to do!

The scene that followed was very pretty, if his mind had been sufficiently free to take it in. The little girls, in their bright summer frocks, subdued by the darker costumes of the boys, poured forth from their eclipse under the tent, and gathered in perpetually moving groups round the little slope. The ladies took their places, smiling and benignant—Mrs. Bellendean in the centre, two of the prettiest girls behind her chair, the others seated about. They all submitted to Joyce, asking, ‘Shall I sit here?’ ‘Shall I stand?’ ‘What am I to do?’ with gay docility. When it was all arranged to her liking, Joyce turned

towards the children. She stood at one side, pointing towards the pretty group under the trees, holding her own fine head high, with a habit of public speaking, which the Colonel thought—and perhaps also Norman Belden, who was looking on—one of the prettiest sights he ever saw.

‘Children,’ said the young schoolmistress, lifting her arm, with simple natural eloquence, ‘this is a tableau—a beautiful tableau for you to see. If you ever read the word in a book, or in the papers, you will know what it means. It is a French word. It means a living group—that is like a picture. This is our Scots Queen Margaret—a far grander Queen than her they call the Queen of Scots in your history-books—Margaret that was the Atheling, that married Malcolm Canmore, that was the son of King Duncan, who was murdered by—who was murdered by——Speak quick! what do you mean, you big girls? Why, it’s in Shakespeare!’ cried Joyce, with a ring of indignant wonder in her voice, as if the possibility of a mistake in such a case was beyond belief.

There was a movement among a group of

girls, and some whispering and hasty consultation : then one put forth a nervous hand, and cried, but faltering, ' Macbeth.'

' I thought you would not put me to shame before all the ladies!' cried Joyce, with a suffusion of sudden colour : for she had been pale with suspense. Then she added, in a business-like tone : ' It is you, Jean, that are to say Portia. The Queen will hear you. Come well forward, and speak out.'

It was not a masterpiece of elocution. The speaker blushed and fumbled, and clasped and unclasped her fingers in agonies of shyness—while Joyce stood by with her head on one side, prompting, encouraging, her lips forming the words, but only twenty times more quickly, as her pupil spoke them. The Colonel was so absorbed in this sight, that he started when a voice spoke suddenly at his elbow, and recoiling a step or two instinctively, saw that it was the young man, evidently a schoolmaster, who had been with Joyce in the tent. He was looking at her with a mixture of tenderness and pride.

' It is quite wonderful how she does it,' he said. ' I've no reason to think I'm un-

successful myself with my big boys ; but I have not got them under command like that. They will make very acute remarks, sir, that would surprise you, in the Shakespeare class—but answer like that, no. It is personal influence that does it—and I never saw anybody in that respect to equal Joyce.'

It gave the Colonel a sensation of anger to hear this fellow call her Joyce. He turned and looked at him again. But there was nothing to object to in him. He was not a gentleman ; but he was what is called in his own class quite a gentleman—a young fellow of very tolerable appearance, whose clothes were of the most respectable description, and who wore them as if he were used to them. He had as good a necktie as Norman's, and a flower in his coat. But when he stood by Norman it was apparent that there was a good deal wanting. He was in all probability much cleverer than Norman. He spoke of Shakespeare with an awe-striking familiarity as if he knew all about him—which was more than the Colonel did. All the same he felt a sensation of offence at the use by this man of the girl's Christian name.

‘Miss Joyce—is evidently a young lady of unusual gifts,’ he said.

The face of the young man flushed with pleasure. ‘Sir,’ he cried, ‘you never said a truer word. She is just running over with capability. She can do anything she sets her hand to. I sometimes feel as if I grudged her to be in the line of public tuition all her life. But when there are two of us,’ he added proudly, ‘we will see what we can do.’

What did the fellow mean? two of them! and one this wonderful girl? the Colonel turned his back upon him in indignation, then turned again in curiosity. ‘Is it common,’ he said, ‘in Scotch parish schools to have a Shakespeare class.’

‘Our common people, sir,’ said the young man quietly, with a look of self-complacence which made the Colonel long to knock him down—‘our common people are far more educated as a rule than you find them in England. But no—I would not say it was common. There are many of my friends that have poetry classes, which are optional, you know, on a Saturday afternoon or other

free moment. I'm not ashamed to say that it was from her *I* took the hint—though you will think it is seldom a woman takes the lead in such a matter. She started it, and several of us have followed her example. She is, as you say, a creature of most uncommon gifts.'

'And yet a ploughman's daughter in a Scotch village: with that face—and that name!'

The young schoolmaster gave a sort of doubtful cough, the meaning of which the Colonel could not divine. 'That is how she has been brought up,' he said; 'but you are perhaps not aware, sir, that many a wonderful character has come from a Scotch ploughman's house. Not to speak of Burns, there was——'

'Oh, I am aware the Scotch are a most superior nation,' cried the Colonel, with a laugh.

'That is just the simple truth,' the young man said.

Meanwhile the recitations were going on, which perhaps were not equal in quality to the rest of Joyce's arrangements. She was

in extreme earnest about it all, it was evident to see, and eager that everything should produce the best effect. A few mothers, who had known what was going to happen, had gathered about, listening with proud delight yet anxiety lest they should break down, each to her own child. Among them was a little old woman, sunburnt and rosy as a winter apple, with an old-fashioned black bonnet tied down over her ears, and a huge Paisley shawl almost covering her dark cotton gown. 'You think but of your own bairns,' she was saying, 'but I think of them a'; for it's a' my J'yce's doing, and she will just break her heart if there's any failure.'

'There will be nae failure; they're owre weel trained for that.'

'I've no a word to say against J'yce; but she's awfu' fond of making a show,' another woman said.

'If she's fond of making a show, it's never of hersel',—it's always your bairns she puts to the front; and if you dinna like it,' cried the old woman, 'what brings ye here?'

The Colonel, who had the best of manners, stepped forward and took off his

hat. 'I guess by what you say, ma'am, that you are Miss Joyce's mother?' he said.

The old woman was a little startled and fluttered by this unexpected address. She, too, hesitated, as they all seemed to do. 'Weel,' she said, 'sir, I'm all the poor thing has had for one; but no so good as she deserved.'

'Ma'am,' said the Colonel, 'the result of your training speaks for itself, and that is the best practical test. Will you let me ask you a question—and that is, whether the name Joyce is a family name?'

The old woman's mouth and her eyes opened in astonishment. 'Joyce,' she said feebly, 'a family name?'

'I mean—does she take it from a relation, as I have always heard was the admirable Scotch way?'

'Weel, sir,' said the old lady, 'if that is all, I have little doubt ye are quite right. She would get it, it's mair than probable, from her mither.'

The Colonel gazed upon her with surprise. More than probable! what did she mean? 'Then it is your name too,' he said, with a

little disappointment. There arose from the group a sudden burst of laughter and explanation and denials, of which he could not make out a word. 'Na, na,'—that was all that reached him clearly. But what was meant by it—whether that it was not the old mother's name, or what other negative—he could not make out: and just at this moment Mr. Bellendean and Norman came up to him and drew him away.

'You have had enough of this, I am sure, Colonel. Come along, we are going down to the Ferry to see what Essex and the rest are after. It's very good of you to give us your countenance to the last.'

'My countenance! nothing of the sort, Norman. I'm very much interested.'

'In the little girls and their "pieces,"' said Mr. Bellendean.

'In the young lady there who has taken so much trouble.'

'What young lady?' said the elder gentleman, looking about. Then he added, in a careless tone, 'Oh, Joyce! Yes, she's an interesting creature, isn't she? It will please my wife if you admire Joyce.'

‘I think then, sir,’ said Norman, ‘I’ll please Mrs. Bellendean too.’

‘Oh, you! you’re a different matter. You had better keep to your own set, my boy,’ said the father. ‘If you are so absorbed, Colonel, we’ll leave you till you have had enough. You’ll find us at the Ferry. Come, Norman, and look after your friends.’

The two gentlemen went away, the Colonel stayed. He was becoming accustomed to the name and the face which had so much disturbed him. If indeed it was a family name—and likenesses, we know, are very fantastic—still for the sake of the name and the face, he would like, he thought, to see something more of her; he would like to give her some little token of his interest, if she would let him. He did not think that he had ever been so much interested in any one before. He thought he could never forget this little scene. Perhaps on the whole, he was tired of the recitations. He took a little stroll about, but came back always to a point where he could see her. If Elizabeth were but here! She would have known in a moment what to do. She would have found out all

about it; how the girl got the name at least, if not how she got that face. By and by the little performance came to an end, and Mrs. Bellendean made a gracious little speech praising every one, and got up from the place under the trees where she had been posing as Queen Margaret; and the children began to get into movement, to arrange themselves in their respective bands, and to prepare for going away.

‘How good of you to stay all the time, Colonel Hayward! They did their best, poor things; but even Joyce cannot create a soul in the Jeanies and Jennys. Now I think we had better go in; it is almost time to dress,’ Mrs. Bellendean said.

The Colonel could not but follow, but he cast wistful looks behind him. ‘I suppose it would only annoy her; but I should like to see more of her,’ he said.

‘Of Joyce? Colonel Hayward, I am afraid you are a dangerous person. I can’t have you turning the head of the best girl in the world.’

He looked round again, lingering, unable to quit the spot. The little procession was

marshalled and ready to set out. But on the spot where she had stood prompting and directing her pupils the young schoolmistress was still standing, lingering like himself. She was looking after him with wistful eyes, with a look of wondering disappointment, as if she had expected something more. That look awakened all the old excitement, which had partially calmed down in the Colonel's heart. The attitude, the raised head, the wistful look in the eyes, all moved him again as at the first, with an overpowering sense of likeness, almost identity. 'What does it mean?' he said; 'I feel as if I could not tear myself away. Who is she? There must be something in a resemblance like that.'

'Whom does she resemble, Colonel Hayward?'

The Colonel turned round again and gave his questioner a look. He looked at her as if he wanted to know how far he could trust her. And then his eyebrows and his mouth worked. 'Of some one—a lady—who has been long dead,' he replied, 'and her name—her name!'

'You are very serious, Colonel; it is not

only a passing interest? It is really something—something! Oh, forgive me. I cannot have her disturbed. She is all quivering with imagination and wonder.'

'Mrs. Bellendean, there is some mystery about this girl. Why should she wonder, why should she be disturbed? Me, yes. I am much disturbed. It is something—of which I have not spoken for years. Oh, if Elizabeth were only here!'

'Then come with me to my room,' Mrs. Bellendean said; 'if we stay here we shall be interrupted every moment. I am beginning to get excited myself. Come this way. The window is always open, and nobody will know we are there.'

She turned for a moment and waved her hand to Joyce, who had just taken her place at the head of the band. Then turning up a side path, led Colonel Hayward round an angle of the house to the open window of a little morning-room. 'Here,' she said,—'we can talk in quiet here.'

CHAPTER III

IT was a little business-room, but the business in it was chiefly feminine. There were baskets of work, shelves full of books in homely covers, a parish or Sunday-school library, and all the paraphernalia of a country lady who 'takes an interest' in her poorer neighbours. It was the room in which Mrs. Bellendean interviewed those of her dependants or retainers who came to ask her advice, or whom she sent for to be reproved or counselled. Her own chair stood in front of a formidable-looking writing-table, and one other stood close by, awaiting the respondent or defendant, whoever he or she might be. The windows looked into a closely surrounding shrubbery, which shut out the view—as if landscapes and such vanities had nothing to do with the sternness of the business trans-

acted here. Over the mantelpiece hung a large engraving of Dr. Chalmers—the presiding divinity. Colonel Hayward came in after her, somewhat tremulous, with a sense that some revelation was about to be made to him. The excitement which he had tried to put off, which he had tried to represent to himself as without foundation, as proceeding from merely accidental resemblances, had once more gained command of him, and with more power than ever. He felt “certain now that some discovery deeply concerning him was about to be made.

‘Joyce,’ Mrs. Bellendean began, ‘is——’

‘I beg your pardon. Joyce what? Tell me her other name.’

‘My dear Colonel Hayward, if you will only listen to me! Joyce—has no other name. Oh yes, she takes the name of the good old people who have brought her up, who love her like their own child. She is a foundling, Colonel Hayward.’

‘A foundling!’ The word did not discompose him as she had expected, but evidently took him by surprise. A look of profound perplexity came upon his face.

He shook his head slightly, and gazed at her, as if he did not know what to think.

‘The story has been told to me so often that I feel as if I had known all about it throughout, though this happened long before I came here. It is a little more than twenty years ago. A lady arrived one evening at the inn in the village. It is a very poor little place—the sort of place where people coming out from Edinburgh on Sundays——’

He made her a little silent yet impatient sign of assent.

‘You understand? Yes, a little bit of a place, where they had a humble room or two sometimes to let in summer. She arrived there quite unexpectedly. She had been going by Queensferry to Fife and the North, and was too tired to go on. And they had no room for her at the Ferry hotel. She had no maid or any one with her, but she seemed a lady to the people here. They were all quite sure she was a lady—very like what Joyce is now, pale, with that little movement of her lips which I tell Joyce—— Colonel Hayward, you look as if you knew, as if you

had known—— Oh, do you think you can throw any light——’

‘For God’s sake go on—go on!’

‘To spare you the details,’ said Mrs. Bellendean, ‘the poor thing was about to have a baby : but showed her condition very little—so little that there was no alarm, nor any idea of a—of a catastrophe. She walked about a little in the evening, and perhaps overtired herself. Anyhow, in the middle of the night she was taken ill. The people made a great fuss when they knew what it was, and wanted her to tell them who her friends were, and her husband, and all that, which probably made everything worse, though they had no unkind meaning. And so when the child was born——’

The Colonel got up from his seat. He went to the window and looked out, turning his back upon her ; then returned to his chair like a man distracted. Mrs. Bellendean paused in her narrative, startled by the sudden movement, and sat silent watching him. He said, in a sort of hoarse whisper, ‘She died?’

‘Not immediately. What happened was almost worse than dying ; she went out of her

mind. Women have many things to bear that nobody thinks of. They are subject to attacks of that kind at such times. The doctor thought she would get better of it ; but she did not live to get better, poor thing! My sister-in-law, who was here then, heard of her, and was very much interested and did all she could. But the poor girl died in about three weeks, without ever being able to tell them where she came from or who she was. They made out that her name was Joyce, from her own wanderings and from the letters.'

Colonel Hayward said with his lips, 'The letters?' scarcely making any sound.

'There was one letter, without any envelope or address, which appeared to be from her husband. And on the night she arrived, before she was taken ill, she had begun to write, to him apparently, about something that had come between them, something that had driven her nearly mad. Colonel Hayward! Yes, they were read by the people who took charge of the poor little baby and who managed everything. I understand what you mean ; it was like prying into the secrets of the poor dead lady. But what

could they do? What do you say? Name? No, there is no name. The husband's letter is signed only H—— Ah! you know! I am sure you know!

The Ah! which came from Mrs. Bellendean's lips was very nearly a scream. The Colonel had risen to his feet, with a pallor upon his face and a gasp for breath which frightened her. He stood as if any touch would have knocked him down, as if scarcely conscious what he was about. His faculties seemed to fail him for the moment. He put up his hand with a sort of dumb appeal, as if to stop what she was saying. Then he himself with an effort broke the silence. She leaned forward with the greatest excitement and expectation. But all that was audible were the words that had been going through his mind all day, 'Oh, if Elizabeth were only here!'

'Elizabeth—who is Elizabeth?' Mrs. Bellendean cried.

He did not make any reply, nor did he seem to hear, but began to walk up and down, passing and repassing between her and the window. He seemed to be arguing,

talking to himself, comparing what he had heard with something else. 'But I never suspected that—never. She said nothing. There might be another—another. It might be all the while, it might be all the while—some one else. How can I tell? Only a name, a name! and so long ago. Oh, if I only had Elizabeth here! Elizabeth would know.'

Mrs. Bellendean here rose up too and touched him on the arm. She was trembling with the excitement of this encounter, which suddenly made the story of the poor young mother—a sort of tradition in the village—into something real. 'Colonel,' she said, 'you know something; you can tell us something? For God's sake, if there is any clue, don't let it go. Tell me, for that poor girl's sake.'

Her touch seemed to restore him to himself. He looked round vaguely, and seeing that she was standing, drew forward her chair with old-fashioned politeness. 'A boorish fellow,' he cried, 'a boorish fellow you must think me, not to perceive that you were standing. How can I beg your pardon?

The fact is, that without Elizabeth—without Elizabeth—there is no good to be got out of me.'

Mrs. Bellendean was a woman full of energy and promptitude. 'If that be so, then let us send for her at once,' she said.

The Colonel made a hasty movement of satisfaction. 'But I am scarcely known to you myself,' he cried. 'How could I take such a liberty? Only your son's old colonel; and he is not even your son.'

'He is a great deal more—he is the master of this house. Who should be so welcome as his own friends? And if I count for anything, and any light can be thrown on this mystery—oh, Colonel!'

'I don't know,' he said; 'I don't know. My mind is all in a whirl. There are some things that make me think—and then there are other things. It is more than I can make head or tail of—alone. And then it's a serious thing—oh, a very serious thing. If I were to do anything hasty, and then it were to turn out a mistake——'

He said this with such an air of trouble, and at the same time of confidence, that his

listener met his look with one of involuntary sympathy, and murmured an assent.

‘She will say I am hasty. I am always hasty ; but then, in the circumstances—— And it is not a case for half measures. If this should be!’ A shiver of strong feeling seemed to pass over him. ‘It would make a revolution in our lives,’ he went on ; ‘it would change everything. There must be no half measures. If ever there was a case in which she had a right to be consulted—— And then she’ll understand in a moment—she’ll see through it. If it’s credible : it sounds incredible ; but on the other hand ——’ He gave her once more that appealing look, as if the dilemma in which he found himself must be evident to her, then added hastily, ‘Will you really be so very good, notwithstanding the little you know of us ? But I might go and get rooms at the Ferry, and not trouble you.’

‘You shall do nothing of the kind,’ she said peremptorily, with a decision that was balm to him. ‘Let us not lose a moment, Colonel Hayward. Here is a telegraph paper ; will you write it yourself, or shall I ?’

He took it from her, and lifted a pen from the table, but his hand shook. 'I am very nervous,' he said. 'It is absurd, but I can't help it. If you will write, "Come at once; I am in great need of you." That will do.'

'Come at once. I am in great need of you,' repeated Mrs. Bellendean; 'had not you better add that you will meet her by the early train? Will she be likely to travel by night?'

'She will come by the first train, whenever that may be.'

'That will be the night express. I shall add, "Will meet you at Edinburgh." And now you must put the address.'

He paused a little without replying. 'You would think that alarming, perhaps, if you got it all at once without any warning?'

'Yes,' she said, with a smile, 'I fear I should; but then no one thinks my help so important as you evidently feel your—this lady's to be.'

'My wife,' he said gravely; 'my wife. Yes, she is very important. Perhaps you will put at the last, "Nothing that is alarming—rather good." I think that will do. To

Mrs. Hayward, Rosebank, Fairhill, Surrey. How can I ever thank you enough!’ He stooped over her hand, which held out the paper, and kissed it with old-fashioned gratitude—‘to let me send for her, when I am but a stranger myself.’

‘I hope she will be able to help you, Colonel Hayward; and I hope my poor Joyce will get the benefit.’

‘Ah!’ he cried. He had come to himself by means of the ready intervention of the practical in the person of Mrs. Bellendean, but faltered again at this as if she had struck him a blow.

‘Perhaps,’ she added hastily, ‘you would like to see—the letters, and the other relics? perhaps——’

He rose up from his seat. ‘I must go and send this,’ he said, and hurried from the room. He came back again, however, a moment after, looking in through the half-opened door. ‘When Elizabeth comes,’ he said, and disappeared again.

Mrs. Bellendean had been greatly excited by the idea of thus touching upon a real romance of life—a story such as comes to

light rarely in the commonplace world. The old Colonel's emotion, the excitement with which he had listened to the narrative, the evident stirring up of old recollections in his mind, and attempt to piece it out from his own knowledge of something which had passed long ago—had wound her up to a pitch of suspense and eagerness almost as great as his own. But a certain comic element came in with the sudden summons of Elizabeth, and the evident determination to put the whole matter, whatever it might be, on his wife's shoulders, and to put off the inquiry until she should appear. Poor Elizabeth!—probably a comfortable mother, suddenly shaken out of domestic peace, and sent for in hot haste to unravel a mystery with which most likely she had nothing to do. Mrs. Bellendean laughed softly to herself: but then changed her expression, and sighed. She was herself of no such importance to any one. She reflected that, if any difficulty should happen in the life of her own husband, she would be the person from whom, above all others, it would be concealed. No one in the world would think of summoning

her to aid him in a desperate crisis. She would be spared all unpleasant knowledge : what everybody would say would be—Don't say anything to her ; why should we disturb her? Perhaps the Elizabeth of Colonel Hayward's thoughts would have been glad to be so exempted from the troubles of life. But Mrs. Bellendean was not glad. She envied the other woman, upon whom it appeared that, habitually, all that was troublesome was thrown. What kind of a woman must she be—an old campaigner, a strong-minded person—who kept the good old Colonel in subjection? That was the most probable explanation.

Mrs. Bellendean sat a little thinking this over, and then she went back to her duties, to see after her guests. The school treat had been happily the end of all the public performances ; but with so many people in the house, every dinner was a dinner-party. When she went out again upon the terrace, the children were just disappearing in a many-coloured line through the avenue of limes, watched by the ladies who had been made to form Queen Margaret's Court under

the great ash-tree. The younger ladies of the party gathered about her as she reappeared. There was one of them who was her special favourite—the only daughter of one of her dearest friends, a distant relation—a little Margaret, to whom she had given her name, and in whom, accordingly, every element of preference centred. Mrs. Bellen-dean had said to herself that if Greta (which was her pet name, to distinguish her from Maggies and Margarets without number) and Norman should by any chance take to each other—why then! But it must be understood that no match-making was thought of, no scheme, no trap laid—only if they should happen to take to each other! Greta was one of the eager band who came forward to meet the lady of the house. She was a slim girl of nineteen, with silky brown hair and gray eyes—the slightest willowy figure, the most deprecating expression,—a fragile creature, who begged pardon for everything—though in looks, not in words—and yielded at a touch to the bolder spirits about. It was perhaps for this cause that Greta was always made the spokeswoman

when anything was wanted in her family and connections ; no one had the heart to refuse the pleading of her eyes.

‘Aunt Margaret, they want so much to have tableaux to-night, after dinner, before the gentlemen come in, just for ourselves.’

‘Oh, I don’t see that,’ said a voice out of the group behind her. ‘We may as well have an audience.’

‘And we want them to help. We must have an Edgar Atheling, and a Malcolm Canmore, and all the Court gentlemen.’

‘Oh no ; dresses for the gentlemen are *impossible*,’ said another, more peremptory. ‘We can manage for ourselves, but how could we get things for them ? Oh no, no !’

Greta stood looking round upon her somewhat rebellious following. ‘I wish,’ she said, with a slight vexation in her tone, ‘you would make up your mind what you do want, before you send me to ask. Aunt Margaret, may we get them up ? and will you be Queen Margaret, as you were to-day ? And will you let us ask Joyce ?’

‘Oh, we must have Joyce !’ cried the chorus. ‘Joyce is indispensable. None of us

know much about Queen Margaret. Please let us have Joyce.'

'The tableaux as much as you like,' said Mrs. Bellendean. 'I have no objection; but Joyce—Joyce is quite another matter.'

'How is Joyce another matter?' cried the little surging crowd. 'Joyce is the very first necessity of all. Oh, Aunt Margaret! Oh, Mrs. Bellendean! Oh, Queen, Queen! Why, she is the one that knows. She is the one——'

'My dear girls, you don't think. How do you suppose she can like it, to come and take her part with you, and be complimented by everybody, and then to go away to Peter Matheson's cottage and boil the potatoes for supper? Besides, there are other circumstances——'

'What other circumstances? Oh, tell us! Oh, I hope she is going to break it off with that Mr. Halliday. He is not half good enough for her. But why should that keep her from helping us?'

'Don't ask me fifty questions all in a moment. Hush! don't say anything. Per-

haps she may be going to find out about her mother.'

This was very indiscreet of Mrs. Bellen-dean: but she was so full of her new information that she could not restrain herself. And then there arose from all those soft throats a unanimous 'Oh!' which ran like a little breeze about the house, and disturbed the flowers in the big baskets. 'Who is she? Is she a lady? I am sure she is a lady!' the girls cried.

'I can't tell you any more. And you must none of you say a word, for she knows nothing; neither do I. I only know that I think—some one knows about her—some one who is here.'

Who could it be? the girls consulted each other with their eyes, and immediately ran over every name of all the dwellers in the house and all the guests, excepting only the old Colonel, of whom nobody thought.

'If there is to be the least hint given, or so much as a look, or anything to awaken her attention—remember, in that case, she must not come. She must not come: I cannot have her excited and disturbed.'

There was a universal cry of indignant protestation. Tell her! oh no! No one would do such a thing. What did Mrs. Bellendean think of them? Were they such silly things, with so little feeling as *that*? Oh no, no! On the other hand, to be taken out of herself, to be made to forget it, would be such a good thing for Joyce. And how exciting and delightful for everybody! To think she might be a duke's daughter perhaps, or a foreign princess, or, in any case, something altogether out of the common way!

'Well, if it must be so,' said Mrs. Bellendean. 'Greta, I think I can trust you to take care of her. Not a word; not a hint. For after all, it is the very vaguest possibility, and it may come to nothing at all.'

'In that case, don't you think it was a pity to say anything about it?' said the matter-of-fact, common-sense voice of Mr. Bellendean.

He was a man said to be full of common-sense. His wife considered him a wet blanket, always putting out her fires, and quenching all enthusiasm. He had a horrible

way of being right which was doubly exasperating. And she had of course regretted that premature hint of hers the moment she had made it. When she turned round and found out that she had taken her husband and his son unwittingly into her confidence, she felt, to use her own words, 'as if she could have cried.'

'Perhaps it was a pity,' she said; 'but one can't always be prudent, and none of you will say a word.'

The young ladies redoubled their protestations, and hurried away to make up to Joyce before she reached the village with her charge. As for Mrs. Bellendean, to avoid further criticism, she turned quickly round upon Norman, who had said nothing, but whose eyes had followed the girls with pleased observation. It was natural, for they were a pretty group.

'Are you very well acquainted with Colonel Hayward?' she asked.

'Acquainted? with old Hayward? Oh yes, I think so,' he said, with a little surprise.

'Then who is Elizabeth?'

The young man had been looking at her

with some curiosity. His face suddenly changed now from grave to gay. His eyes lighted up with humour. 'Elizabeth!' he said, with a laugh, 'have you found her out? She is Mrs. Hayward, I know; but I have never seen her. She is his other self—no, that's not the right way of putting it. She is himself, and he is the other. Oh, everybody knows about Elizabeth.'

'She is coming here to-morrow,' said Mrs. Bellendean.

'Coming here! none of us have ever seen her,' he replied. 'She was always at the hills, or home for her health, or something; though some people said she kept close in the bungalow like a native lady, and never would show——'

'Good heavens! she is not a native, Norman, I hope? Don't say that, please.'

'One of your usual hasty proceedings, my dear; but it would be some fun to have a Begum in the house.'

'I don't think it is likely; but I don't know. He was always wishing for her. We made rather a joke of it, I fear. I have heard him, when he was giving his orders—

and he is a very smart soldier, dear old fellow, though perhaps you think him a —— I have heard him say between his teeth, “If Elizabeth were but here,” when most men were only too thankful their wives were out of the way.’

‘I like that,’ said Mrs. Bellendean, with a sigh. ‘I like it very much. Women would be a great deal happier if their husbands would always treat them so.’

‘What ! take them out to face the enemy ?’ her husband said. But he knew very well what she meant ; and though he was a very well-bred man, and showed no sign of it, he resented both her little speech and her smaller sigh.

CHAPTER IV

IT was not very far from the terrace at Bellendean to Peter Matheson's cottage in the village, which was a cottage with a but and a ben—that is, an outer and an inner, two rooms downstairs, into one of which the door opened, and two others above. There was nothing in front but the village street, from which you could tap at the window of the kitchen in which the family lived ; but behind there was a little garden, with some large lilac and rose bushes, and an ash-tree with a small plot of grass round its patriarchal feet. Joyce had come back tired from the dusty walk with the children just as her granny, as she called the old woman who had been her guardian all her life, had taken off the large Paisley shawl and the close black satin bonnet, which were her state

costume out of doors. Mrs. Matheson—called Janet in the village, a freedom which Joyce resented—had folded up carefully her ‘grand shawl’ and laid her bonnet upon it, to be put away presently, and had seated herself in the high-backed wooden chair to rest. The kettle was beginning to boil on a fire kept as low as possible in compliment to the hot June day. Though she had shared in the refreshment under the tent, Janet was not contented to accept that in place of the much-prized cordial of her own brewing. ‘Na, na; what ye get out o’ an urn may be gran’ drinking,’ she said, ‘but it’s never like my tea.’ She was waiting till the kettle should boil to ‘mask the tea,’ which even Joyce did not do altogether to her liking. When the door opened and the girl came in, Janet was sitting, musing as she waited, near the fire, according to cottage custom. She was old, and it was not too warm for her, and she was tired and enjoying what it requires the long habit of toil to enjoy thoroughly, the entire quiescence of physical rest. To sit there, doing nothing, was sweet at her age. In former times she could remember

being impatient for the boiling of the kettle. In these days she would have whipped up her bonnet and shawl and ran upstairs with them, thinking it an idle thing to leave them there even for a moment; and she would have set out the cups while she waited. But now she was not impatient. There was no hurry, and rest was sweet. She looked up when her child came in—who was her child certainly, though not her daughter—with a pride and admiration of her looks, and her dress, and everything about her, that never failed. Joyce wore a dark dress, which she had made herself, after the model of a dress of Greta's. Her little collars and cuffs were like those the young ladies wore, without the slightest ornament. It vexed Janet a little that she would not wear a locket, as all the girls did in the village, and as the young ladies also did. It was as if they took her siller from her, or hoarded it up, or grudged her any bonnie thing she would wear. 'Eh! if it was me,' Janet said, 'she would be just as fine as the best. There's naething I would not ware upon her—a gold chain on her neck, and a gold watch at her side, and a

ring upon her finger ; but she will not be guided by me. And to see her looking like a young queen, and no a thing to show for it but just her ain bonnie looks ; eh ! I hope it'll not be remembered against us if we're awfu' proud ; for Peter is just as bad as me.' But all this was said in the absence of Joyce, and to her face the old mother gave utterance to little phases of detraction, as it is the part of a mother to do.

'You're very soon back ; you're back maist as soon as me. I am just waiting for the water to come a-boil, and then I'll mask the tea. You will be better, after a' yon botheration, and the trouble you've been giving yoursel', of a good cup of tea.'

'I had some in the tent, granny,' said Joyce, sitting down wearily near the door.

'Oh ay ! in the tent. If yon's what pleases the leddies it doesna please me. What's the matter with ye ? You've just weariet yoursel' with thae weans and their pieces, till ye canna tell whether you're on your head or your heels. Na, na ; sit still and rest. I've had naething to tire me. I'll get out the cups mysel', and we'll keep

the teapot warm at the side of the fire for Peter. He likes it a' the better the mair it tastes o' the pot.'

'What did you think of it all, granny? Who did you like best? Did you like the tableau, with the Queen and the ladies? Wasn't it like a picture? I wonder if the real Queen Margaret was as handsome as ours, and all her maidens as sweet.'

'Your head is just turned with them, J'yce; and yon would be your doing, too? Putting up Mrs. Bellendean upon a throne, as if she was the duchess. I thought that bid to be one o' your fancies; and they just do what ye tell them, it seems to me, young and auld, and the leddy hersel'. Your head would be just turned, if it werena for me, that never spoilt ye. Sit to the table like a reasonable creature, and take your tea.'

'I don't want any tea, granny. I'm only tired. There was a gentleman there——'

'And what's that to you, if there were a hundred gentlemen?' said her guardian quickly. 'Na, na; there is to be nae talk about gentlemen between you and me.'

'It was an old gentleman, granny,' said

Joyce, with a smile curving slightly the grave lines of her mouth.

‘The auld anes are often waur than the young anes,’ the old woman said.

‘Oh, granny!’ cried Joyce, ‘what is that to me, if they are old or young? This one asked me—granny, listen! listen! for my heart is beating hard, and I must get some one to listen to me;—he asked me, where I had got my name,—who had given me my name? with a look—oh, if I could let you see his look! Not as some do, just staring, which means nothing but folly—but a look that made his eyes open wide, and the colour go out of his face.’

‘It was just very impident of any man to look at you like that.’

‘No, it was not impudent. He was an old man with a sweet face, as if he was somebody’s father—some girl’s father that is my age. And he asked me, “Young lady” (he did not know who I was)—“young lady, where did you get your name?”’

The terms of this address moved Janet much more than the meaning. ‘Well, I’ll not say that I’m surprised: for if ever there

was a young lass that looked like a lady, no to flatter ye—for flattery's no my way——'

'Granny, granny, you don't see what I mean. It was not me that he was thinking of. He was wondering to hear me called Joyce; and he knew somebody—he knew—some one that was like me—that had the same name.'

Old Janet paused in the act of pouring out the tea. 'I mind now,' she said. 'There was somebody asking me where ye got it,—if it was a name in the family; but I took no thought. Bless me! can ye no be contented with them that have done their best for you all your life?'

'I am very well contented,' said Joyce; but the involuntary movement of her mouth contradicted her words. She added, after a little pause, 'No one is so well off as I am. I have the kind of work I like, and my big girls that learn so well, and you, granny dear, that are always so kind.'

'Kind!' said the old woman, with quick offence; 'if you think I'm wanting to be thought kind——'

'But I should like,' said Joyce, who in the

meantime had been murmuring something to herself about the 'Happy Warrior,' and had not given much attention to this disclaimer—'oh, I should like to hear who I am,—to hear something about *her*, to know——' She paused, as if words were insufficient to express her thoughts, with a thrill of meaning more intense than anything she could say, quivering in her lips.

'Oh ay,' said Janet, 'I ken what you mean; to hear that you were born a grand lady, though you've been bred up a cottage lass, that you're Leddy Joyce or maybe Princess—how can I tell?—instead of just what you are, Joyce Matheson, that has made herself very weel respectit, and a' her ain doing—which is a far greater credit than to be born a queen.'

'Granny, you whip me, but it's with roses—no, not roses, for there are thorns to them, but lily flowers. Oh no, not Lady Joyce, nor anything of the kind,' she went on, with a tell-tale blush suddenly dyeing her pale face. 'I might have thought that when I was young—but not now. It is only a kind of yearning to know—to know—I cannot tell

what I want to know—about my mother,' she added in a lower tone.

'Bairn,' said Janet, 'let that be—let it be. Poor young thing, she's been long long in her Maker's hands, and a' forgotten and forgiven.'

'If there was anything to forget and forgive; you take that for granted, granny!' cried the girl, with a sudden flush of indignation.

'Onything to forgive? There's aye plenty to forgive even to the best; but oh, J'yce, my poor lassie, take my advice and let it be. Many strange things happen in this world: but a poor thing that wanders into a strange place her lane with no a living creature to care if she lives or dies—oh, J'yce, my bonnie bairn, let it be!'

Joyce had risen, as if the remark was intolerable, and stood at the window looking out blankly. It was a discussion which had taken place often before, and always with the same result. Old Mrs. Matheson took, as was natural, the matter-of-fact view of the question, and felt a certainty that shame as well as sorrow must be involved in the secret of Joyce's birth, and that to inquire into it

was very undesirable. But, as was equally natural, Joyce, since she had been old enough to understand, had built a hundred castles in the air on the subject of her birth, and occupied many an hour with dreams of perhaps a father who should come and seek her, perhaps a mother's mother, like an old queen—people who would be noble in look and thought—perhaps, who could tell, in birth too? The Lady Joyce, with which old Janet taunted her, had not been altogether a fiction. Who could say? Mysteries were more common among the great than among the small, the girl said to herself. And how many romances are there in which such a story appears? There was the 'Gentle Shepherd,' the one poem beside Burns and Blair's 'Grave,' which was to be found in the cottage, and which she had known by heart almost before she could speak. Was not the shepherd Patie a gentleman all the time and Peggy a lady? and both of them in their first estate full of poetry, and distinguished among their seeming peers, as Joyce was well aware she had always been?

By some strange grace of nature Joyce

had escaped the self-conceit which is so common to the self-taught, so usual, must we say it, in Scotland? Her consciousness of being able to do a great many things as other people could not do them, got vent in a little innocent astonishment at the other people, who either were dull beyond what is permitted, or would not 'give their thoughts' to the proper subjects. She grew impatient by times with their determined stupidity, but thought it their fault, and not any special gift of hers that made the difference. It was for this reason that she had very sedately accepted the addresses of Mr. Andrew Halliday, who was schoolmaster in the next parish. He was a young man who was full of intellectual ambitions. He could talk of books, and quote poetry as long and as much as any one could desire. Joyce had been moved by enthusiasm on their first acquaintance. She had felt herself altogether lifted out of the vulgarities of common life, when he talked about Shakespeare and Shelley, and Scott and Burns—and with a little smiling commendation, as from a superior altitude, even of the 'Gentle Shepherd.' It sobered

her a little to find that, like the other 'lads' in the village, he was intent upon a 'lass,' and that she was the object of his choice. But she gave in to it with dignity, feeling that he was indeed the only person with whom she could mate; and looked forward to the career of the schoolmistress, the schoolmaster's wife, with an adaptation to herself of the now so well-worn lines of the 'Happy Warrior,' which Joyce was not aware anybody had ever appropriated before. Yes; she would work out her life upon the plan which had pleased her childish thought. For it had been her ambition since ever she began to be able to do and learn so many things which the girls around her would not in their invincible ignorance be persuaded to attempt to do—to coax, or drag, or force them into better things. Who but a teacher who would never let them rest, who would give them no peace till they understood, could do that? And she was resolved to do it, with a hope that Providence might throw in the possibility of something heroical—the saving of somebody's life, the redemption of some one who was going wrong—to make up.

This was all laid out before her, the career which was to be hers.

But nevertheless (though she had abandoned all that folly about the Lady Joyce), when her mind was free, and nothing before her that compelled her attention, the romance of her unknown origin would come in, with a hundred vague attractions; and Colonel Hayward's question was more than enough to call everything back. 'Young lady, where did you get your name?' and then his look! She had caught that look again, constantly coming back to her. Joyce was well enough aware what looks of admiration are like. She had met them of every kind—the innocent, the modest, the bold—but this was not one of them; not even the fatherly kind, of which she had been conscious, too. This look was very different: it was the look of a man so startled, so absorbed, that he could think of nothing else; and then he had said, 'I once knew—some one'—Joyce stood and listened, yet did not listen to what old Janet went on saying behind. The old woman was launched on a subject which filled her with eloquence. She was jealous of the poor little mother who

had died—jealous at least of the idea that somebody might arrive some fine morning who would turn out to have a better claim than herself upon her nursling. In her heart Janet had always been certain that this was what would happen some day. She had spoken of it freely when the child was young, bidding Peter, her husband, to ‘haud a loose grip.’ ‘We maunna think too much of her,’ she had said; ‘for just when we’re bound up in her, and cannot do without her, her ain kith and kin will come and carry her away.’ She had gone on saying this until the slumbering light in Joyce’s eyes had leaped out, and her quick intelligence had seized upon the expectation; after which Janet had changed her tone. She went on now in a very different strain, while Joyce stood at the window turning her back. ‘If I were in your place,’ she was saying, ‘I wouldna hear a word—no a word—that would maybe make me think shame o’ my mother. Oh, I wouldna listen—no, if it was the Queen hersel’!’ Joyce made no reply to these exhortations, but her heart burned. Her imagination rejected the idea with a fervour

of suppressed indignation and resentment, which it needed all her gratitude and affection to keep in check. She stood and looked out, her foot tapping impatiently on the floor, her hand on the window. It was hard, very hard, to keep silent, though it was her duty so to do.

‘Granny,’ she said at last, ‘say no more, please. For one thing, I cannot bear it—and for another, here is Miss Greta, and I think she is coming to our door.’

‘Miss Greta! They might have kept her to her ain right name, which is a hantle bonnier than ony of your outlandish names; but she’s very free to come and very welcome, and grand company for you—I’m aye glad to see her coming here: is that her at the door? Come in, come in, my bonnie leddy. Joyce was just telling me—and we’re just awfu’ fain to see you, both her and me.’

‘Oh, thank you, Mrs. Matheson. Joyce! you are to come up to the house to-night,’ said the young lady, coming in, in the gaiety of her pretty summer dress, like a sunbeam. ‘Aunt Margaret has sent me to tell you: and I’ve run half the way, but I could not catch you up: you are to come to-night.’

Once more Joyce became crimson with expectation and excitement. Her eyes seemed to send out eager questions, and her lips to repeat the answer before the question was made. 'What is it?' she asked. 'Has the gentleman——' and then stopped short, devouring the young visitor with eager eyes.

'We want to have tableaux,' cried the girl; 'it was you yourself that put it into our head: and you must come and help us—we could do nothing without you. Joyce, we want to do Queen Margaret—the same scene we had on the lawn for one. Captain Bellendean said it was beautiful: and then—something else. You are the one that knows all about Queen Margaret, Joyce.'

While Greta made her little speech, with a wondering sense after a word or two that she had stumbled into the midst of some dramatic scene which she did not understand, the face of Joyce was like a changing sky, save that the changes upon it were of swifter operation than those which alter the face of the heavens. It was full of a brilliant glow and flush of expectation at first: then the

clouds suddenly swept over it, extinguishing all the higher lights : and then the shadows in their turn wavered and broke, and a chill clearness of self-repression came in their place, a calm which was like the usual calm of the countenance in repose, but intensified by the fact that this repose was not that of nature but of a violent effort, and had in it the gleam of self-scorn which answered in a certain vivid paleness to the effect of the light. A few instants were enough to work out all this drama, which was the truest reflection of Joyce's mind. For one wild moment of hope, she had thought with a kind of certainty that her 'patroness, 'the lady,' the source of so many pleasures in Joyce's life, was sending for her to tell her that her anticipations were realised, that her birth and kindred were discovered, and that she was to be told who she was. So swift are the operations of the mind that in her instantaneous conception of this, Joyce had time to make sure that there was no shame but only happiness in the revelation about to be made, or Mrs. Bellendean, always kind, would not have sent for her in this marked

way. The thought sent the blood dancing through her veins, and though, perhaps, she did not picture herself as Lady Joyce, her mind yet rushed towards unknown glories in which insignificance at least had no place. And then there came a sense of absolute and sickening disappointment, such as seems to check the very fountains of life—disappointment so overwhelming that she felt herself stand up merely like a piece of mechanism by no strength or will of her own—a state of mental collapse from which she awoke to such scorn of herself for her former incoherent hopes as brought the blood to her cheeks again.

It takes longer time to describe these varying moods than it did to go through them, one sensation sweeping through her mind after the other. She had come to herself again after mounting to those heights and descending to those depths, when she replied, rather coldly, vaguely, to Greta's petition, 'If I can get away—if I can be spared from home.'

'Spared from home! oh ay, she can be spared, Miss Greta, weel spared. She is aye

so busy and taken up with thae bairns that a little pleasure will just do her a great deal of good.'

'Pleasure!' said Joyce, echoing the word. 'I will come if the lady wants me; but there is a good deal to do—things to prepare. And then—and then——' She paused with a conscious effort, making the most of her hindrances—'I am expecting a friend to-night.'

'A friend?—that will be Andrew Halliday,' said the old woman, again interposing anxiously; 'you can see him ony day of the week; he's no that far away nor sweared to come. Where are your manners, Joyce? to keep Miss Greta standing, and hum and ha' as if ye werena aye ready to do what will pleasure the lady—aye ready, night or day.'

'If Joyce is tired, Mrs. Matheson,' said Greta, 'I will not have her troubled. But are you really so tired, Joyce? We cannot do anything without you. And it was all my idea, for there is no party or anything: but I thought it would please—all of them. Only I could do nothing without you.'

'Yes, yes, I am coming,' cried Joyce

suddenly ; ' I was only what granny calls cankered and out of heart.'

' Why should you be out of heart,' said the other girl, ' when everything went so well and everybody was so pleased ? It is perhaps because you will miss Mr. Halliday ? But then he can come up for you, and it's moonlight, and that will be better than sitting in the house. Don't you think so, Joyce ?'

' The moonlight is fine coming down the avenue,' Joyce said vaguely. And then she asked, ' Will the old Colonel—the old gentleman—will he be there ?'

' Oh, did you take a fancy to him, Joyce ? So have I. Yes, he will be there—they will all be there. We are to have it in the great drawing-room—and leave to rummage in all the presses in the red room, you know, where the old Lady's dresses are kept, and to take what we like.'

' That would be fine,' said Joyce, ' if it was for last century ; but if Queen Margaret is what you are wanting, that's far, far back, and the old Lady's dresses will do little good. There will be nothing half so old as Queen Margaret——'

‘Oh,’ cried Greta, her countenance falling, ‘I never thought of that.’

Joyce hesitated a moment, and the light returned to her eyes. ‘I will go up with you to the house now, if granny can spare me, and I will speak to Merritt, and we will think, she and I; and when you come out from your dinner we will have settled something. Oh, never fear but we will find something. It is just what I like,’ said Joyce, restored to full energy—‘to make out what’s impossible. That’s real pleasure!’ she cried, with sparkling eyes.

‘Did ever ony mortal see the like,’ said Janet to herself as she stood at the door watching the two girls go down the village street. ‘What’s impossible! that’s just what she likes, that wonderful bairn. And if onybody was to ask which was the leddy, it’s our Joyce and not Miss Greta that ilka ane would say. But, eh me! though I am so fain to get her a bit pleasure, what’s to come o’ a’ that if she is just to settle doon and marry Andrew Halliday? That’s ~~what~~ what is impossible, and nae pleasure in it so far as I can see!’

CHAPTER V

THE tableaux had taken place to everybody's satisfaction. There had been much applause, and Joyce had been called for to receive the thanks of the audience ; but all muffled up in a dark cloak in which she had figured as one of Queen Margaret's travelling retinue, she had not revealed anything to the amused look of the gentlemen and ladies who were spectators, except a dark and indistinct outline against the light. When the others, throwing off the veils and cloaks in which she had enveloped them, joined their friends in the drawing-room, which was to Joyce the emblem of everything that was most splendid and beautiful in the world, she stole away, getting her hat from Merritt's room. Merritt would gladly have detained her for a gossip afterwards ; but Joyce, though she told her-

self with an angry humility, which was more stinging than pride, that it was Merritt who was her equal and not Greta, would not stay. She went out into the silence of the night, hearing the voices of the company, with a keen desire to know what they were saying, and to share in the enjoyment which imagination represented to her as so much more delightful than any kind of social intercourse she had ever known. Joyce felt this with a sharp and keen sensation which she said to herself was not envy. Oh no, no! for envy is unkind, whereas she desired no harm, but only good and every pleasantness to the delightful company where there were so many whom she was fond of; but only a forlorn consciousness of her own position as one who could not get access there, yet was at home nowhere else. No; all that youthful folly about Lady Joyce was nonsense, she knew. She would never be Lady Joyce, never find a place in the Queen's Court, or among the people who are grand and great, and the flower of the land; but yet there was her place, and nowhere else was she at home.

She did not venture to say this to herself,

yet the thought was in her mind as she stepped out with a sigh down the terrace steps, leaving the lights blazing, and the voices, so refined, as she thought, and delightful, rising in a soft tumult behind. She was tempted to steal along the terrace to an open window, to hear what they were saying, to peep in for a moment out of the gloom. But Joyce would not, could not do this thing. The temptation wounded her pride even while it moved her. What! she, Joyce, go and peep and listen, like a waiting-maid in a play! No, no; though they were so sweet, though they drew her as if with a magnet—no, no. She turned round resolutely away from this snare. On the other side the housekeeper's room was shining too, and there was quite a fine company there—the ladies'-maids so fine, and gentlemen in evening clothes, quite equal to anything that was to be seen in the drawing-room. Joyce flung her head high—not there at least! though with a keen pang of self-humiliation she felt that there everybody would think was her appropriate place. But the fine ladies'-maids were too fine for her. There was something in that. It

enabled her to feel a consolatory thrill of disdainful pride.

When she had gone on a little, and reached the beginning of the avenue, a shadow shaped itself out of the darkness of the night, and a shawl, unnecessary and undesired, was quickly put upon her shoulders. 'I was told to bring you this—and I've been waiting half an hour. Oh, keep it on, the night is chilly—to please me, Joyce.'

'Why should you make me do what I don't wish, to please you?'

'Well, if it is what you don't wish; but consider that your health is of great consequence, and if you were to catch cold—or any unpleasant thing——'

'There could not be a better time,' said Joyce, 'at the beginning of the holidays.'

'Has something gone wrong with you to-night?—you are not as sweet as your ordinary—oh yes—sweet always, sweet ever to me. But something has come over you. You are so merry about them sometimes. You make me laugh, though I am not sure that it is right to laugh at the aristocracy—they have their difficulties, as we have ours.'

‘I wonder at you! Wherein are they different?—the same flesh and blood, I hope—no better education, often not so good. What then? Who was it they referred to for everything to-night?—to know all about the story and the history: the history of their own country, and we in sight of the very scene! Who did they come to ask from as if I were an oracle? and you say that knowledge is power——’

‘Yes, in a way, assuredly it is. There is a moral superiority; there is a sense of true nobility——’

‘Oh, stop, stop! In spite of all, if I had stayed there,’ cried Joyce, with an indignant sweeping motion of her arm towards the lighted windows, which now shone like faint stars in the distance, ‘should I have been like them? They would have talked and been kind; they would have asked me questions. What would you like, Joyce?—a cup of tea? Have you seen these pictures, Joyce? What can we show her to amuse her? And a gentleman would have come forward and said something, looking as if he were afraid I would curtsy when I spoke to him, like

one of the children ! and there would be little looks at me as if it were wonderful I could behave myself. And the lady herself, who is all goodness — yes, she is all goodness ! — would give me a glance after a while, or perhaps a whisper, Now, Joyce, run away. Why — why should it be — so little difference, and yet so much ? To feel nothing but scorn at the thought they are our betters, and yet never to feel at ease with them !' Her foot gave an impatient mortified stamp on the ground, and her eyes, unseen, overflowed with hot and angry tears.

' These are questions which are sometimes painful — but not necessarily so,' said the young schoolmaster. ' Take hold of my arm going down the avenue. Oh do ! It is dark, and you might stumble, and the moon gives little light under the trees. And then, don't you think I have a right to a little, just a little, kindness, more than everybody else ? Well, then,' he went on in a satisfied tone, as Joyce, moved by this argument, conceded the arm, though with some reluctance. ' I will tell you all about it. It would be painful if it were not looked at from a high point of view.

It is mortifying when there is no difference—when you are just as well instructed, perhaps better, and acquainted with all the rules of politeness, and even etiquette, and all the rest of it’—Joyce moved uneasily, impatiently, on his arm, and he had to hold her fast to retain it—‘to feel that there is a difference!’ he went on hastily; ‘and founded upon nothing reasonable, upon no solid ground. For to call them our betters is folly. Wherein are they our betters? not in acquaintance with everything that is best—with literature, with science, with what Tennyson calls the long results of time.’

‘If you think you are explaining, you are making a mistake,’ said Joyce,—‘you are only repeating what I said.’

The young schoolmaster laughed, but with confusion and a little resentment. ‘I am coming to the explanation,’ he said. ‘For one thing, it’s against our dignity, yours and mine, that are just as good as they are, to take offence. It’s a pitiful thing to take offence.’

He said ‘peetiful,’ and now and then made other betrayals in accent of his northern

origin ; but that was nothing, for some of the gentlemen did the same. This thought flew through Joyce's mind with the rapidity of light, followed, like its attendant shadow, by another, a painful, hateful consciousness of this involuntary proof of the differences which they were discussing. The gentlemen ! Why or how this distinction, which she herself made without knowing ? In the darkness, unsuspected of her companion, who was going on quite easily, she blushed to her hair, to her heels, with a glow all over her.

‘ But we must reflect,’ he said, ‘ that in this world there must always be a certain sacrifice to appearances. And it's more lovely and of good report to keep up different grades. Abstract justice is one thing, but fair-seeming also has to be considered. An aristocracy is a graceful thing. People like us, that consider these matters, may well consent to keep it up for the beauty of it. We cultivate flowers for the same end. It would be more profitable to fill all the garden beds with cabbages or gooseberries. We yield that for beauty, and we yield the other too. And then you and I, Joyce,’ he said, pressing her

arm, 'we have the advantage or the disadvantage, whichever you like to call it, of belonging to an exceptional class.'

Here again a murmur made itself heard in Joyce's mind. Did *he*? For herself she made no question. She put him in her mind beside Captain Bellendean—the Captain, as everybody called him—and her brain grew confused. But Halliday continued, with an equable sense of giving instruction, which confused her more and more.

'We are, so to speak, everybody's equal,' he said. 'We are probably superior to most of these people, but we are not going to compete with them in their way. There is no doubt that we are superior to the other classes, who cannot, in any manner, hold their own with us, except just by sheer force of money, or something of that measurable kind. We have therefore a rank—a rank, Joyce, that is by itself, that is becoming more and more acknowledged every day.'

He pressed her arm as he spoke, and she, wildly roving in her mind through every kind of by-way of thought, did not like it, but made no sign, restraining herself, answering

nothing, which was not Joyce's way. She was thus caught and attached to reality, while her mind went wandering through space, in no way agreeing in the supposed triumphant argument of his—sometimes flashing a contradiction upon him which he could not see; chafing at the restraint; eager to throw him off, yet not doing so; held fast by circumstances and her fate.

‘When you and I set up together, Joyce,’ he said, clasping her arm closer, ‘which I hope will be soon, for I’m weary waiting—when you and I have our home together, we’ll have a home where any one may be proud to come to; where every meal will be a feast, and nothing spoken of or thought of that is not high—above the ideas of the common. We’ll have nothing common there. We’ll talk of the grandest things. We’ll be better than princes or kings; and by and by, when the world’s a little wiser—as we’re making it wiser every day—when a great statesman comes to Mid-Lothian, or a great scholar or a poet, it’s you and me he’ll come to. We’ll not have grand rooms to put him in, but it’s with us he’ll find the minds to understand

him. Even now, if Tennyson were to be up yonder,' he pointed back to the house— 'would he care for them, who could not quote a line he ever wrote, or us, who could say—what could we not say?—all his poems, I believe, between you and me.'

At this Joyce laughed aloud with a sudden burst of ridicule. 'Do you think he would care to hear his own poems? I think he would rather go up to the house, where nobody would be afraid of him.'

'Afraid of him! why should we be afraid? I hope our manners are good enough for—as good as——'

'Oh, what do you mean about manners? doesn't that just prove what I say?—we should be afraid of him. We could quote all his poems one after another. What would he care for that? Miss Greta, that knows none of them, except perhaps the Queen of the May, would please him better. Why? Oh, how can I tell you? but *I know it!* She would know the people he knows; and, don't you see, when you speak about manners, that alone shows—— Oh yes, we are different, and that is the truth. We may know more—

and we might know double again, and it would not make any difference. There is more in it than that.'

'Yes, there is money in it, if that is what you mean,' said the schoolmaster scornfully.

'That is not what I mean ; but it's true—there is money in it—and beautiful rooms, and people that have lived in them all their life, and their fathers before them, and that are used to be the best wherever they go. We say we're the best, but we're not used to it. It is in our thoughts, but not in other people's. Oh, there is a difference ! I feel I don't belong to the cotters' houses, but I am at ease in them : and in the farmers' I feel—oh, a little queerish, as if I were smiling at their money and their notion that they were better than me—superior as you say. But in Bellendean I would be awkward and blush. I would say, Thank you, mem, or sir. Perhaps I could talk better than the rest if I were to try——'

'You could—you could.'

'What would that matter ?' cried this stern philosopher. 'I would be just Joyce

Matheson among them all. But here I'm not Joyce Matheson, I'm—anything. I'm Desdemona, or even Rosalind. I'm Lady Joyce, as granny says. I'm no match for any but a prince—oh, Andrew!—what I meant to say was that in my thoughts I'm a grand lady, but in Bellendean, nobody—nobody! a little schoolmistress, a little country girl.'

'I know what you mean,' he said, recovering the hand she had drawn from his arm. 'But if you love me, Joyce, I'm prince enough for anything,' he said in a lower tone.

This touch of feeling suddenly coming in silenced Joyce. She made no reply. Love had been little talked of between them. They had thought more of Shakespeare and the poets generally, and of that culture which levels all distinctions, and makes of those who are engaged 'in tuition' the superiors of the world. There was always this strange question, too, so little explicable, of class distinctions, which contradicted all theories, and set culture aside as if it meant nothing. They were both aristocrats by birth, holding fondly to the doctrine of a superior race, but feeling also a wistful, nay, sometimes angry,

wonder why their own special affinities for that race were not more justly recognised.

‘After all, the class that we belong to is the greatest of all,’ said Halliday. ‘The greatest men have come out of it. The peasant is a kind of king. He has nothing to do with money-making, and poor sordid trades. He digs his bread out of the soil. However we may get up and up, we have no reason to be ashamed of him. In the cottages you are at your ease, you said——’

‘But not because I belong to them,’ cried Joyce, with a flash of her eyes. ‘If I did, I would not say so ; it would be natural. But I don’t : I belong to nobody : if I were a peasant, I would be a peasant and nothing more ; but I am nobody, and I think and think—and sometimes I have silly dreams.’

He tried again to take her hand. ‘Not silly, perhaps,’ he said ; ‘the world is before us. I see nothing that we might not do—you and me together, Joyce.’

You and me together ! This was not what she was thinking of. The vague exaltation and vaguer hope which sometimes swept her up to heights unknown had nothing to

do, it must be confessed, with Andrew Halliday. She drew herself apart from him, on the evident ground that they were emerging from the darkness of the avenue into the bright moonlight at the park gates. The village street opened beyond, with various groups about enjoying the freshness of the night. The women were out at their doors ; a knot of men smoking their pipes and talking in their slow rustic way, stood together at a corner. Without a doubt, there were two or three pairs, not so bashful as Joyce, taking advantage of the moonlight. But it was in conformity with Halliday's principles as well as her own to maintain the loftiest decorum. They walked down side by side, with quiet gravity and propriety, talking of what Mr. Halliday called ' the topics of the day ' : the success of all the festivities in honour of the Captain's return, the Captain himself and his character, and other cognate subjects,—a kind of conversation which anybody might have listened to with edification. Indeed, even in the avenue, where it was dark, and Joyce's arm was in that of her lover, the talk had not been any drivel of love-

making, as the reader knows. But Joyce had not said a word to him of the excitement which lay deep at the bottom of her heart. She had never said a word to Halliday of the commotions which the thought of her possible origin awoke; and of Colonel Hayward and his strange questions and looks she had said nothing. All this was kept a secret from her lover; she kept it jealously, but she could scarcely have told why..

Old Peter Matheson stood at his door, in the full light of the moon, which threw all the roughnesses upon his surface into shadow, as if he had been a mountain. He was a mountain in his way, or rather an angular tall old crag, his face seamed as with torrents. The moon subdued the high colour, the deep frosty-red and russet-brown of his weather-beaten countenance, and made his scanty circle of white locks like a silver crown. He was standing in the middle filling up the doorway, with a lordly indifference to his wife, who stood spying at the moonlight from under his arm.

‘Yon’ll be them,’ Janet had said, as the

two slim figures suddenly rose out of the white distance.

‘How can ye tell it’s them? It might be onybody,’ said Peter, in his deep voice.

‘Wha would it be but them? It’s no the Captain and some young lady — therefore,’ said Janet, ‘it’s bound to be our twa. There’s nae ither twa like them. And I would ken our Joyce at ten mile.’

Peter grumbled something about the impossibility of seeing anything except the hills or the sea at ten miles, and about the nonsensical character of her remarks generally. But with a swelling at his old heart which almost brought the water to his eyes (not hard to do), decided that she was right, and that Joyce could be distinguished as far as mortal vision would carry. The way she stepped, and the carriage of her—like a lady! she was just like the Queen!

‘Sae it’s you after a’. I was thinking nae ither pair would move along like twa steeples, nae nearer. Come away. It’s a bonnie night, but I’m wantin’ my supper. I canna fill my wame with the moonlicht, like you twa.’

‘Is it late, grandfather? I might have known it was late, as it’s so dark, or would be but for the moon.’

‘Na, na,’ said the old man, with a laugh as deep and bass as his voice; ‘it wasna to be expected you should mind. We’re no lookin’ for impossibilities. But there is a fine smell of stoved ta’aties. Your granny is a woman that loses no time.’

‘Now that they are come,’ said Janet from within, ‘come in, come in to your supper. Dinna stand and chatter there.’

The supper was simple enough. There were oatcakes and cheese on the table, a large dish of stoved potatoes, steaming and savoury, and a jug of milk. The potatoes were a feast for a king; the steam of them rose like domestic incense to the dim roof. The table was set as far from the fire as possible, the door left open, the moonlight, silver to the threshold, stopped about a yard within, drawing a clear line of separation between its intense ethereal whiteness and the ruddy light of the little lamp. Joyce sat facing the moonlight, looking out across the homely table into that mystic world outside :

conscious of the contrast between the little human group, so well defined and distinct, the smoky lamplight on their faces, and the great universe beyond, all filled with spiritual light, with moving shadows and subdued voices — mystic, mysterious. Now and then a step passed, the line of some flitting figure crossed the doorway, and sometimes a cheerful voice called 'Good-night' at them in passing, while the talk went on within.

'Weel, and did a' yon nonsense come to pass, and were ye satisfied?' Janet asked.

'Yes, granny; pretty well. Everybody was pleased.'

'Except yoursel', ye exacting thing! They wouldna do just a' ye told them, that would be the cause.'

'J'yce is a lass that likes her ain gait. Ye manna gang into it wi' your eyes blindfolded, Andrew, my man.'

'Yes, they did what I told them, granny. But the Scots maidens could hardly be distinguished from the Saxon maidens, which was a mistake; and we could not get anything like right costume, there was so little

time. But they knew no better,' said Joyce, with a slight inflection of contempt; 'they were quite pleased.'

'And that is a very difficult question,' said the schoolmaster. 'Do you think there would be much difference at that early period?'

'What!' cried Joyce, lighting up, 'between the Saxon ladies that were with the Athelings, that had been in a Court, and the wives of the wild Picts, or whatever they were—for history knows little of them—on the other side!'

'And what were you?' said Janet, while Peter burst into one of his long, derisive, admiring laughs, with a 'Hearken to her!' which brought the water to his eyes.

'I was nobody. I was a tirewoman. I was not thinking of *me*. I was in the lady's train in her journey, with a big cloak of the Captain's,' said Joyce, permitting herself to laugh.

'And wherefore no' a Scots lady, to wait upon her in her kingdom,' said Janet, half offended. 'You have aye an awfu' troke

with thae English, as if you liked them the best.'

'How can she do that when she never kent ane?' said Peter, in his innocence.

But Joyce made no reply.

CHAPTER VI

COLONEL HAYWARD was in waiting on the platform at Edinburgh when the morning express came in from the south. It was a lovely morning. The unconventional freshness, as of a day still in its childhood and doubting nothing, was in the air, even in the grimy precincts of the railway station, where all was black below, yet all fresh above, the sun shining, the air full of that keen sweetness which, even in a July morning, breathes in the air of the north. The platform was already full of people waiting for their friends; and when those friends arrived, and came pouring from all the carriage doors, with the noise combined of a crowd and a train, the Colonel was confused by the din and numbers. Though he had the habit of command, and could have made his authority felt in a

moment had they been soldiers under him, he was pushed out of his way by women and children and railway porters, without power of asserting himself; and therefore it was not till most of the passengers had poured out of the train, that he got to the particular object of his search — a small, very bright-eyed woman, who stood in the door of the carriage she had travelled in, looking out calmly upon the confused scene. She was not grimy, as most of the passengers were, or untidy with the night's travelling, or hurried and flustered as everybody else was. She stood calmly looking down from the height of the doorway, quite patient and composed. She knew that the Colonel would come: she knew that he was not very good at pushing his way: therefore she possessed her soul in patience, making no fuss, showing no anxiety about her box, calm, commanding the situation. 'Ah, here you are,' she said quietly, as he came up to her, stepping lightly down.

'Have you been waiting long, my dear?'

'Oh no; it didn't matter. I knew you would come. I have one box, and I know

exactly where it is. Don't let us hurry. I don't suppose there is any hurry.'

'No—perhaps not,—but something very serious, very serious, Elizabeth.'

'I supposed so, or you would not have sent for me. Wait till we get out of the noise. I could not hear you, so what would be the use? We are going to a hotel, I suppose?'

'We are going to Bellendean, where I am staying. Don't be surprised.'

'But I am surprised, Henry. To the great house you wrote to me about? full of ladies? You forget——'

'I—forget? No; I forget nothing—all you have done for me, your kindness, your patience.'

The little lady took him by the arm, with a look of alarm in her face. She had already sighted her box, and in the course of her dialogue with her husband, had managed telegraphically to secure a porter and a cab. Evidently she was of the order of women who take care of others, and do not expect to be taken care of. She led him towards the cab, as if a little afraid of his sanity. 'Where is he to drive to? tell him,' she said,

keeping a close hold of the Colonel's arm. She held him fast still, when they were seated together, until they had got clear of the tumult of the railway station. 'Now,' she said, 'tell me. It must be something very much out of the ordinary when you talk of my kindness, Henry. My kindness!' In this Mrs. Hayward resembled old Janet Matheson. It was an offence to her to be praised in that way.

'My dear,' he said, 'I am more perplexed than I can tell you. You will say I have often been perplexed before, when you saw little cause for it; and this is why I sent for you so suddenly; for if anybody can bring light out of darkness, it is you.'

'What is it? I am very willing to be sent for, Henry; the only difficulty is going to this house, when you know my principle, and how long I have kept out of all invitations and acquaintances.'

'You that would shine anywhere!' said the Colonel, with the water in his eyes, 'and all for my sake.'

She looked at him again for a moment with a sort of consternation. 'There you are making a mistake, my dear—for my own.'

Because I did not choose that there should ever be a remark.'

He put his hand upon her arm with a heavy pressure. 'Elizabeth, I am dreadfully perplexed; but I think, if I am not wrong, that I have come upon the settlement of all that question; of everything—of what has hung over us. I think, my dear, that all is right—that all has been right from the very beginning.' He stopped a little, and then added, drawing a long breath, 'I never had any doubt of it myself.'

A gleam, half of anger, half of fun, darted up into her bright eyes, and flashed like an arrow of light at him, which the good man did not even see, and which ended, on her part, with a quick laugh, in which there was a little amusement, a little excitement, though not very much expectation. 'You never had any doubt!' she said. Then she added, with a half sigh of impatience—'Tell me all about your new discovery, and we'll pull it to pieces and see if there's anything in it. Have we a long drive before us? Is there time to get it all out?'

'Plenty of time; and, oh, the comfort to

know that you are here, and to be able to tell you! I will do what you like best, Elizabeth. I will tell you all the facts, and then you can judge for yourself. I came to Bellendean, you know, nearly a week ago. There has been all sorts of things going on. Great dinners, and all the fine people of the county—and then the tenantry. It is a—tidy estate—a number of tenants—not small farms like what we are used to, but men, yqu know, whom really I should have taken for country gentlemen—men paying big rents, and able to make speeches—and—and that sort of thing.'

Mrs. Hayward kept her eyes upon her husband's face. She was used, it was evident, to long explanations, and expected them, and had learned that patience which comes of necessity. He knew this fact, that she always heard him out, and never interrupted him, as other people did. But what he did not know, was that a thrill of natural impatience, never altogether overcome, was in the veins of the little woman who sat by him, keeping him to the point with her eyes, never interrupting him in any other way. 'Yes,'

she said, when he paused to take breath : but that was all.

‘Yes ; and then, last of all, there was a supper to the labourers and cottagers. Well, no, not exactly last of all, for the last was the children’s entertainment—the school-feast we should have called it, but they don’t say school-feast here—a sort of gathering in the afternoon, you know, with a band and games, and tea in a great tent, and—you know ?’

‘Yes, I know what a school-feast is.’

‘Well !’—he drew a long breath now, and settled himself down in a manner which betokened, as his wife by long experience knew, that he was about coming to the point ; but she could scarcely believe it after so short a preamble. ‘The first thing that happened was at the labourers’ supper : we were all walking about, and I for my part said a word now and then, while they were cheering Norman Bellendean—that he was a good fellow, you know, and all that—the sort of thing one would say at an affair of the kind, when you do think well of the fellow, you know, and get into the swim——’

‘Yes ?’ said Mrs. Hayward again.

‘Well then. I had the very words in my mouth, when at the end of one of the tables, between an old man and an old woman, evidently cottagers, I saw—I declare to you, Elizabeth, my heart leapt into my mouth—I was choked, I could not say another syllable. I saw her as clear as I see you.’

‘Whom did you see, Henry?’

‘Joyce!’ He got out the word with difficulty, and, taking out his handkerchief, fanned himself, puffing forth a hot breath of excitement. His bronzed face took a coppery tone in the heat of his reawakened feelings; and this time Mrs. Hayward did not retain her usual calm. She repeated the cry, ‘Joyce!’ with a tone of mingled astonishment and dismay—‘Joyce!—then why in the name of heaven did you bring *me* here?’

‘Stop a minute, stop a minute, Elizabeth: you have not heard all; and how is it possible you could understand? I have described her to you often. It was as if I saw her, exactly as I had seen her last—the same looks, the same age.’

‘You must be dreaming,’ cried his wife, almost with anger. ‘If she is living, accord-

ing to all you have always said, she must be as old as I am——'

Sudden indignation seemed to burst from her in these words. She grew red, she grew pale. The impatience, so entirely concealed before, showed now in every finger, in every limb, mingled with angry surprise. 'If you have sent for me, disturbed me, exposed me, only to tell me this at the end—that you saw her—the same age as you saw her last! I hope she has a good reason to give for all the misery she has caused—but the same age!' Mrs. Hayward gasped, and said no more.

'Ah,' said the Colonel, shaking his head, 'you don't see, you don't see! No more did I. I couldn't say a word—I just stopped and stared—a young lady, clearly a lady, between the two old cottagers—and that look. Well! I came to myself, Elizabeth, and I thought it is just some chance resemblance, and I left the place: but disturbed—disturbed beyond what words could say. I got little sleep—you know how little sleep I get when I am upset.'

'I know you think so,' said his wife, in an undertone.

‘But in the morning I felt calm. I said to myself that it must be some chance— Of course there are people who are like each other all over the world. I knew myself, up in the Punjaub, a man—but that is neither here nor there. However, next day I was quite easy. I thought nothing more of it. And then there came the school-feast I told you of—well, the thing that was the same as a school-feast, though they didn’t call it a school-feast, you know. I was walking about, thinking of nothing in particular, and of course it was daylight, and every thing quite clear—when I saw that girl again.’

‘Oh, you call her a girl now!’ Mrs. Hayward said, with that air of resentment which he did not understand. He paused and looked at her with sudden anxiety.

‘You are not feeling poorly, Elizabeth? You are not over-tired? You are not——?’ He could not say angry, it seemed ridiculous; but his attention was roused, and nothing but her health could be the cause, he thought, of her change of tone.

‘Go on,’ she said, ‘go on. I am not feel-

ing anything—but a wish to know what you mean.'

There was a difference in her for all that. And if Elizabeth was going to fail him, what would become of him? He gave her a serious, anxious, inquiring look. Then, in reply to an impatient movement on her part, continued—

'That's not all. I went and asked Mrs. Bellendean who she was—though I had scarcely breath to ask. Elizabeth—conceive what I felt when she turned round and called Joyce!'

'Joyce!—well I suppose you did not expect she had changed her name?' She said this sharply; then added, with an evident effort, 'My dear, I beg your pardon. I don't wonder you were upset. Joyce—and it is a name one never hears. Did she—know you?'

'Know me? She had never seen me, nor heard of me—how should she know me? And I was left for a long time in a state I can't describe—wondering whether it could be a relation—God knows what I didn't think! Everybody knew the girl. She was

the schoolmistress, as it turned out, but a lady every inch of her. Everybody liked her, consulted her, clustered about her. I heard nothing but Joyce, Joyce, wherever I turned.'

Mrs. Hayward's impatience seemed to have died away. She patted his arm with her small hand, saying, 'Poor Henry!' with a tone of compunction in her pity. She had done him wrong, or else she had done wrong to Joyce. To Joyce—the very name, though she had heard it so often, was like an arrow quivering in her heart.

'Elizabeth, all that is as nothing to what I am going to tell you now. I want all your attention. I have waited till you came: I haven't even tried to think: I have said to myself, Elizabeth will know. Now you must give your mind to it, and tell me what to do. Elizabeth, this is the story I heard. Twenty years ago, just the date I've often told you—the date I remember so well—you know, my dear, you know——'

'Yes, I know.'

'Well!—Just then this girl's mother came to Bellendean—all by herself, going north, it

was thought. She was going to have a baby——' The old Colonel here fell a trembling, and his wife took his hands and held them in her own, caressing them—two large brown tremulous hands—between her small white nervous ones. He leant back on her shoulder too, which was not half broad enough to support him. 'The short and the long is this: she had her baby, and she died. And the baby is Joyce—named after her mother; and there are clothes and letters to prove who she was——'

'My poor Henry! God help you, my dear! You have seen them? it was—she?'

'No—I haven't seen them. I hadn't the courage. I could think of nothing but you. You'll do it for me, Elizabeth? you'll see what you think. I—I couldn't look up the old things. I—couldn't—decide—I couldn't——'

He could do nothing but tremble, it seemed, and falter out these broken words, and lean back upon her, the colour going out of his face. She thought he was about to faint.

'Come, Henry, this will never do,' she

said quickly. 'Rouse yourself, my dear fellow—rouse yourself up. We will bear it together, whatever it may be. And it doesn't seem, so far as I can see, as if there would be anything new to bear.'

'If it was so. She never told me, Elizabeth—that anything like that could happen.'

'Perhaps she did not know. You have always said she was young and inexperienced. Oh, poor thing! poor thing!'

Heloosed his hands from hers, and suddenly threw his arms round her, enfolding her, with something like a sound of sobbing. 'If it was fault of mine, God forgive me! God forgive me! But, Elizabeth, my dear! it has always been all right between you and me—as I felt sure all along.'

Her bright eyes were for a moment dimmed too. She gave him a sudden light kiss upon his old cheek, and then softly detached herself. 'We will say no more about that just now. If all this is as you think, Henry, there is something more important even than you and me—the girl.'

'Ah, the girl!' He spoke vaguely, as if his attention had been distracted from that

part of the subject. 'You will see her,' he said, 'the very living image—and then the name—just as she was the last time I ever saw her. Elizabeth: you will understand the kind of creature she was—the—the impetuosity—the——'

'Don't dwell on all that, or you will upset yourself again. See her! of course I shall see her. You don't seem to realise what a wonderful change for her—and us too. But don't you think it is you who ought to see her first and tell her—you who are, after all, the chief person——'

'I!' he cried with dismay, interrupting her. 'Why the chief person? Did I ever set myself up as the chief person? We have gone along with each other, Elizabeth, in everything that has been done.'

'Yes, but in the case of—Joyce,' she made a little pause before she said the name. 'Henry, Joyce, whether living or dead, must be yours—yours alone. She would have a right to complain if you left her to me.'

He caught her again with an alarmed look

by her arm. 'Is there anything mine that is not yours too? Has there ever been anything of mine that was not yours? Don't go and make a separation just when—just when——'

'Separation! it is likely that I should make a separation,' she cried, with a laugh in which there was, though he was unconscious of it, a great deal of nervous excitement. Then she looked out of the carriage with a little cry of admiration: 'What is this? Have we got to Bellendean already? What beautiful trees! I did not know there were such fine trees in the north. And now I must think of meeting Mrs. Bellendean. Isn't it rather bold of you to bring me here?'

'Not bold at all. The invitation was from her. I did not ask for it. It was she herself—entirely she——'

'I know what you did,' said Mrs. Hayward, with a smile. 'You said, I wish Elizabeth were here. And she heard it, and suggested that you should send for me. Most likely she was a little amused about Elizabeth. I know your way, and what the

young fellows say, that you always want Elizabeth, whatever happens.'

'So I do—so I do; though I can't tell how they know, the jackanapes. Here we are at the door.'

'You must smuggle me upstairs before anybody sees me, for I'm very untidy; and I know how fresh they will all look in their morning things,' cried Mrs. Hayward, with a shade of disquietude in her eyes.

'Oh yes, you shall be smuggled' upstairs,' cried the Colonel, confident in the security of the early hour. And presently the pair found themselves in the cheerful room prepared for the newcomer, with tea set out upon a table. Elizabeth took at once the command of the position. She gave him some tea, then dismissed him to an easy-chair in his own room, which communicated with hers, where, as he began to doze, he could see her little figure moving about, appearing and disappearing, as she unpacked her things and made herself comfortable. She looked, he thought, as if she had been there all her life. It was a faculty peculiar to her. She made the barest barrack-room

look like herself somehow, before she had been half an hour in it. Wherever she was, the place began to appear like home directly. He had the immense sense of relief which a man in charge of a difficult post feels on the arrival of his commanding officer who takes over the responsibility, and that delightful loosening of moral tension filled him with pleasant drowsiness. His eyes, half shut, half open, were conscious of her, and that everything was being looked after ; and, as a matter of fact, he had not slept well for two or three nights, though Elizabeth had scoffed at this. He had a most refreshing doze while she dressed and made herself look as fresh as the morning. As for her having been untidy, even after the night-journey, that was a thing impossible to Elizabeth. But he knew that she would come out looking fresher than the day. *

She was a little woman of about forty-five, with the complexion of a girl, and eyes that were as blue as an infant's, but with the quality of brightness which belongs more frequently to a darker hue. Not soft and dreamy as blue eyes should be, but keen and

clear, dancing with light—eyes which saw behind as well as before, and which nothing could elude. There was no sleep or weariness in them, but there was, visible to her own perception as she looked at herself in the glass, a keener glitter of uneasiness, a little curve of anxiety in the lids. He seemed to think only of this possible revelation of the past—which, no doubt, was important, very important; but of the future, which she saw so distinctly opening upon them, a future entirely new, distracting, for which neither she nor he had any preparation, he seemed to take no thought. That was Henry's way, she said to herself, to be overwhelmed by one view of a question, which had half a dozen other aspects more important, and to make himself quite comfortable about it when the first shock was over, without an idea of what the consequences might be: dear old stupid that he was! She, too, glanced at him as she passed and repassed the doorway, with a tenderness in which there was a mixture of amusement and partial irritation and fun and sympathy, all mingled together. His goodness, his

strength, his helplessness and confusion of mind, his high courage and authority and judgment, and his complete dependence and docility, were all so evident to those keen eyes of hers, which adored him, laughed at him, smote him with keen shafts of criticism, made haloes of glory about him all at one and the same moment. He had brought her many a ravelled skein to disentangle, but never any so serious as this. Joyce dead had been a shadow often discouraging enough upon her life, but Joyce living filled her lively soul with a shrinking of dismay. And of this he did not seem to have a thought.

CHAPTER VII

JANET MATHESON was busy with her broth, which was boiling softly, slowly over the fire, ready to receive the vegetables—red, white, and green—the carrots and turnips and early crisp cabbage, all nicely cut and glistening with freshness and cleanness, which she had just prepared to add to the contents of the pot. She had a large brown Holland apron covering her cotton gown, and a thick white cap surrounding her frosty-apple cheeks. The room was as neat and bright as her own little active figure. The little greenish window behind was open to admit the scent of the mignonette in the garden, and the pale pink monthly rose which looked in. On the sill of the opened window there was a line of books, and a writing-table stood under it, slightly inappropriate, yet disturbing nothing

of the homely harmony of the cottage. The door to the street was open too, and any passing stranger could have seen Janet, who now and then looked out, with a carrot in one hand, and the knife with which she was scraping it in the other, wondering where that lassie J'yce could have gone to. The holidays had begun, and Joyce was free. She had done her share of the household service before she went out; but her tender old guardian was of opinion that about this hour 'a piece' was essential, though that was a thing of which Joyce could never be got to take proper heed. She had turned her back to the world, however, and was emptying her bowlful of vegetables into the pot, when Mrs. Hayward tapped at the open door. Janet said mechanically, 'Come in—come away in,' without hurrying the operation in which she was engaged. When she turned she found another bright-eyed woman looking in at her from the pavement.

'May I come in?' said Mrs. Hayward.

'Certainly, mem, ye may come in, and welcome. Come away,' said Janet, lifting a wooden chair, and placing it, though the day

was very warm, within reach of the fire. It was clean as scrubbing could make it, yet she dusted it mechanically with her apron, as is the cottager's use. Mrs. Hayward watched every movement with her bright eyes, and observed all the details of the little house. A simple woman, looking like a French peasant with her thick cap; a little rustic village house, without the slightest pretension of anything more. And this was the house in which the girl had been bred who Henry said was a lady—a lady! He knew so little, poor fellow, and men are taken in so easily. No doubt she was dressed in cheap finery, like so many of the village girls.

‘I wanted, if you will allow me, to make some inquiries about your—but she is not your daughter?’

‘About Joyce?’ said the old woman quickly. She put down the bowl and came forward a few steps, from henceforward departing from her *rôle* of simple hospitality and friendliness, and becoming at once one of the parties to a duel, watching every step her adversary made. ‘And what will ye be wanting with Joyce?’ she asked, planting

her foot firmly on the floor of her little kingdom. She was queen and mistress there, let the other be what she might.

‘It is difficult to say it in a few words,’ said Mrs. Hayward. ‘I have heard that though you have brought her up like your child, and been so tender to her, yet that she is no relation of yours.’

‘There are idle folk in every place,’ said Janet sententiously, ‘who have nothing to do but to stir up a’ the idle tales that ever were heard about the country-side.’

‘Do you mean, then, that this is an idle tale?’

The two antagonists watched each other with keen observation, and Janet saw that there was something like pleasure, or at least relief, in her adversary’s manner of putting the question. ‘It a’ depends on the sense it’s put in,’ she said.

‘We can’t go on fencing like this all day,’ cried Mrs. Hayward quickly. ‘I will tell you plainly what I want. My husband has seen the girl whom you call Joyce.’

‘Mem, you might keep a more civil tongue in your head,’ said Janet, ‘and ca’ her something else than the girl.’

‘What should I call her? I have not seen her. It is not with any will of my own that I am here. I hear her very highly spoken of, and your great kindness to her, and her—what is far more uncommon—gratitude to you.’

‘Mem,’ said Janet, ‘we Scots folk, we’re awfu’ unregenerate in the way of pride. We are little used to have leddies coming inquiring into our maist private concerns, ca’ing a woman’s affection for her bairn kindness, and a good lassie’s good heart for her faith and mither gratitude.’

‘I quite agree with you,’ said Mrs. Hayward, rising up suddenly and putting out her hand. ‘You are quite right, and I am—unregenerate as you say. The reason is, I have been a little put out this morning, and I have inquiries to make which I don’t make with any heart. I have come to ask you to let me see the things which Joyce’s mother left behind her—or at least the letters which Mrs. Bellendean told my husband of. A glance at them would possibly settle the question. My husband thinks—that he knows who she is.’

Janet had wiped her hand with her apron, and given it to her visitor, but with some reluctance. 'And wha may your husband be, mem?' she said.

'He says he spoke to you the other day. He is, though I say it, a distinguished soldier. He is Colonel Hayward, who was Captain Bellendean's commanding officer.'

Janet was not greatly moved by Colonel Hayward's distinction, nor by his grade, but that he should be the Captain's commanding officer impressed her at once. 'Then he'll be a gentleman that's far aboon the like of us,' she said, 'and no' a man that would put forth his hand for naught, or disturb a decent poor family without just cause.' She stood a little, fingering her apron, 'glowering frae her,' as she would have said, casting a wistful look into vacancy. 'It will maybe be something—that would make a great change,' she said, her lips quivering a little, 'if it cam' true.'

'I am afraid it would make a great change,' said Mrs. Hayward, and she added with a sigh, 'both to you and to me.'

'To you!' Janet clasped her hands.

‘What will you have to do with it? What would it be to the like of you? You’re no—you’re no——? or the Cornel——?’ The old woman put her hand with natural eloquence to her breast. ‘My heart’s just loupin’ like to choke me. Oh mem, what would it be to you?’

‘Look here,’ said her visitor. ‘We may be giving ourselves a great deal of unnecessary trouble. It may happen that when I see the letters it will all come to nothing. Then let me see them directly, there’s a dear woman. That is the best and the only thing to do.’

There was a sweep of energetic movement about this rapid little lady that pressed forward Janet’s reluctant feet. She took a step or two forward towards the stair. But there she paused again. ‘I’ve aye said to Peter we must keep a loose grip,’ she said. ‘And when she was only a wean it would have been nothing: but she’s come to be that between him and me, that I canna tell how we’re ever to part. I’ve never said it to her. Na, I’m no’ one to spoil a young cratur’ with praisin’ her. I’ve kept it before her,

that if she had mair headpiece than the rest, it was nae credit of hers, but just her Maker that had made her sae. It's no' for that. It's no because she's an honour and a glory to them that have brought her up. Whiles the one that you are proudest of is just the one that will rend your heart. But she's that sweet—and that bonnie—bonnie in a' her ways—ye canna help but see she's a leddy born; but to take upon hersel' because o' that? Na, na. That shows ye dinna ken our J'yce. Oh, I aye said haud a loose grip!' cried the old woman, with broken sobs interrupting her speech. 'I've said it to my man a thoosan' times and a thoosan' to that; but it's mair than I have done mysel' at the hinder end.'

The stranger's bright eyes grew dim. She put her hand on Janet's arm. 'I should like to cry too,' she said—'not like you, for love, but for pure contrariness, and spite, and malice, and all that's wicked. Come and show me the letters. Perhaps we are just troubling ourselves in vain, both you and I——'

'Na, na, it's no in vain,' said Janet, re-

straining herself with a vehement effort. 'If it may be sae this time, it'll no' be sae anither time. We may just be thankful we have keepit her sae lang. I never looked for it, for my pairt. I'll gang first, mem, though it's no' mainners, to show you the way. This is her cha'amer, my bonnie darling; no' much of a place for a leddy like you to come in to, or for a leddy like her—God bless her!—to sleep in. But we gave her what we had. We could do nae mair—if ye werè a queen ye could do nae mair. And she's been as content all her bonnie days as if she was in the king's palace. Oh, but she's been content; singing about the house that it was a pleasure to hear her, and never thinking shame—never, never—of her auld granny, wherever she was. She has ca'ed me aye granny—it was mair natural; and nae slight upon the poor bonny bit thing that is dead and gone.'

Janet went on talking as she placed a chair for the visitor, and went forward to the rude little desk where Joyce kept her treasures. She talked on, finding a relief in it, a necessity for exertion. Mrs. Hayward

looked round the little homely place, meanwhile, with a curiosity which was almost painful. It was a tiny little room with a sloping roof, furnished in the simplest way, though a white counterpane on the little bed, and the white covering of the little dressing-table in the window, gave an air of care and daintiness amid the simple surroundings. A few photographs of pictures were pinned against the wall. But the place of honour was given to two photographic groups framed, one representing a group of school children, the other a band of (Mrs. Hayward thought) very uncouth and clumsy young men. Janet, with a wave of her hand towards these, said—‘Hersel’ and her lassies,’ and ‘Andrew and some of his freends.’ It seemed to the keen but agitated observer, in the formality of the heavy cluster of faces, as if all were equally commonplace and uninteresting. She sat down and watched, with an impatience which nothing but long practice could have kept within bounds, while Janet opened the desk which stood against the wall, and then a drawer in it, out of which at last, with trembling hands, she

brought a little parcel, wrapped in a white handkerchief. Janet was as reluctant as her visitor was eager. She would fain have deferred the test, or put it aside altogether. Why had she kept these papers for her own undoing? She undid the handkerchief slowly. There fell out of it as she unfolded it several small articles, each done up in a little separate packet. 'A' her bit things that she had,' Janet explained. 'A locket round her neck, and a bit little watch that winna go, and the chain to it, and twa rings. I wanted Joyce to wear them, but she will wear nothing o' the kind, no' so much as a bit brooch. Maybe you will ken the rings if you see them,' said Janet, always anxious to postpone the final question, putting down the larger packet, and picking up with shaking fingers, which dropped them two or three times before they were finally secured, the tiny parcel in which the ornaments were enclosed.

'No, no,' said Mrs. Hayward. 'The letters are the only things. Show me the letters, I implore you, and don't let us torture ourselves with suspense.'

‘Ae kind of torture is just as bad as another,’ said the old woman, undoing with great unsteadiness the cotton-wool in which the trinkets were enclosed. She held them out in the palm of her brown and work-scarred hand. A little ring of pearl and turquoise, made for a very slender finger, in a simple pattern, like a girl’s first ornament, and beside it another, equally small, a ruby set round with brilliants. The glimmer of the stones in the old woman’s tremulous hand, the presence of these fragile symbols of a life and history past, gave the spectator a shock of sympathetic pain almost in spite of herself. She put them away with a hurried gesture—‘No, no ; nothing but the letters. I never saw these before ; I know nothing—nothing but the letters. Show me the letters.’

Janet looked at the trinkets and then at Mrs. Hayward, with a rising light of hope in her eyes. ‘Ye never saw them before ? It will just be somebody else and no her ye was thinking of ? That’s maist likely, that’s real likely——’ wrapping them up again slowly in their cotton-wool. Her fingers,

unused to delicate uses, were more than ever awkward in their tremor. To put them back again was the business of several minutes, during which she went on: 'You will not be heeding to see the other things? I have them here in her box, just as she left them—for Joyce would never hear of puttin' on anything—and they're auld-fashioned, nae doubt, poor things. You'll no be heeding?—oh ay, the letters—I'm forgetting the letters. But, mem, if ye've nae knowledge of her bit rings and things, ye will get nothing out of the letters. There's nae information in them. I've read them mysel' till I could near say them off by heart, but head or tail of them I could mak' nane. Here they are, any way. She's made a kind of a pocket-book to put them in—a' her ain work, and bonnie work it is—flowered with gold; I never kent where she got the gift o't. Ye would think she could just do onything she turned her hand to. Ay, there they are.'

And with no longer any possible pretence for delay, she thrust a little velvet case into Mrs. Hayward's hand—who between im-

patience and suspense was as much excited as herself. It was worked in gold thread with a runic cross, twisted with many knots and intertwinings, and executed with all the imperfections of an art as uninstructed as that of the early workers in stone who had wrought Joyce's model. Inside, wrapped carefully in paper, were the two silent witnesses—the records of the tragedy, the evidence which would be conclusive. Mrs. Hayward's hands trembled too as she came to this decisive point—they dropped out of her fingers into her lap. Her heart gave a leap of relief when her eye fell on the handwriting of the uppermost, which was unknown to her. The other was folded, nothing showing but the paper, yellow and worn at the edges with much perusal. In spite of herself, she took this up with a feeling of repugnance and dread—afraid of it, afraid to touch it, afraid to see——what instinct told her must be there. She paused, holding it in her hand, and gave Janet a look. No words passed between them, but for the moment their hearts were one.

Mrs. Hayward opened the folded paper,

then gave a low cry, and looked at Janet once more—and to both the women there was a moment during which the solid earth, and this little prosaic spot on it, seemed to go round and round.

‘It will be what you was looking for?’ said Janet at last. She had been full of lamentation and resistance before. She felt nothing now except the hand of fate. The other shook her head.

‘Yes,’ she replied, and said no more.

CHAPTER VIII

IN the meantime Colonel Hayward was walking up and down the village street, waiting for his wife. He passed and repassed the door two or three times. He was very nervous, hanging about, not knowing what to make of himself. The church stood at the end of the street, and a path led down by the side of the churchyard, in the direction of Bellendean. As he came to the end of this, he stopped in the abstraction of his mind to look down the line of shade which a high hedgerow opposite to the low mossy wall of the churchyard threw half-way across the path. Some one was coming along in this clear and soft shadow, which was so grateful in the midst of the sunshine. It startled him to see it was Joyce, in her dark dress, her face relieved against the broad brim of an

untrimmed straw hat, which added in its tone of creamy white additional force to the very delicate tints of her face, so clear in the shadowy air, with an impression of coolness in the midst of great warmth. He cast an anxious look of suspense over his shoulder towards the house where his wife was ; but as he did not see her, nor any sign of her coming, he turned down the path to meet Joyce. It was rather by way of diverting his own anxiety than from any eagerness to address her. He seemed to want somebody to whom he could talk to relieve his own mind ; for up to this moment, except from curiosity and anxiety in respect to the past, and a certain admiration of herself and her demeanour, it had not been Joyce, upon her own account, who had interested the Colonel. He had not had leisure as yet to get so far as her—for herself. He went on to talk to her because she was in it, concerned like himself, though she might not be aware of the fact, in the matter which his wife at present was engaged in clearing up. It was as if the scene then going on at the cottage was a consultation of doctors upon the life or

death of a beloved patient. Those who are waiting breathless for the opinion, which is at the same time a sentence, are glad to get together to ask each other what they think,—at least, to stand together and wait, feeling the support of company. This was Colonel Hayward's feeling. He went towards the girl with a sense that she had more to do with it than any one else—but not with any perception of its immense importance to her.

Joyce had gone out in the freedom which comes to all the members of the scholastic profession, small and great, with the first morning of the holidays. To have no lessons to give, no claim of one kind or another, nothing but their own occupations, whatever they may be, gives to these happy people a sense of legitimate repose. For one thing, the members of almost every other profession have to go away to secure this much-desired leisure, but to the teacher it comes, without any effort, by appointment of nature so to speak, by a beneficent arrangement which takes all selfishness out of the enjoyment, since it has been invented, not for the good primarily of himself, but of the flock who are

so happily got rid of, to their own perfect satisfaction. The sweet consciousness that the happiness and freedom of so many sufferers have been consulted before one's own, gives sweetness and grace to it. Joyce had risen this morning with that exquisite sense of freedom, and she had gone out with a book as soon as the household work she never neglected was over, to read and muse on a favourite spot, a point in the park at Bellendean out of reach of the house, where behind a great screen of trees the wayfarer came suddenly in sight of the Firth, the circle of low hills which protects the narrower sea at the Queen's Ferry, and the sheltered basin of St. Margaret's Hope. The sight of this wonderful combination of sea and sky and solid soil, the soft hills rising round, the mass of gray stones on the water's edge, which marks a ruined castle, the island in the midst, the widening out beyond into the infinite, into the wider Firth and the stormy waters of the northern sea, affording an ever-open door for the fancy,—were delightful to this imaginative girl. She had taken her book, but she did not open it—for which she

upbraided herself, confessing in the secret depths of her soul that Andrew would not have done so,—that he would have read and expounded and discussed and found a new beauty in every line, where she, so much his intellectual inferior, did nothing. She did not even think—if further avowal must be made, she did not even see the lovely landscape for the sake of which she had come here. It entered into her, reflecting itself in her dreamy eyes, and printing itself in her mind; but she did not look as Andrew would have done, finding out beautiful ‘lights,’ and commanding all the details of the scene. Joyce was a little short-sighted, and did not see the details. It was to her a large blurred celestial world of beauty and colour, and abundant delicious air and sunshine. Her thoughts went from her, where she sat in the heart of the morning, looking over the Firth, with all its breadth of melting light and reflection, to those low hills of the further shore.

It had been thus that she had entered upon her holidays in the other days when life had no cares. The dreamings about Lady Joyce, and all the speculations as to

her future, had come in other scenes, where there was a want of brightness and of a stronghold of her own to retire into. Here she had not needed that fanciful world of her own. But to-day Joyce was in a different mood. After a while she began to become insensible altogether to the scene, and resumed more personal musings instead. 'Young lady, where did you get your name?' It was not the first time she had been so questioned. Half the people she met asked her the same: but not as Colonel Hayward did. 'I knew some one once'—what did he mean? why did he not come back and tell her? These thoughts became urgent after a while, so that she could not sit and dream, as was her wont in her favourite spot. She got up with a little impatience and vexation and disappointment to return home. But in the lane which led up to the village street, in the clear shadow of the tall hawthorn hedge, behold some one advancing to meet her, at sight of whom her heart began to beat—more loudly than it had ever beaten at the sight of Andrew Halliday; it sprang up thumping and resounding. 'He knows

who I am,' she said to herself. 'Perhaps he will tell me; perhaps he is looking for me to tell me. Perhaps he is something to me.' Her veins seemed suddenly to fill with a rushing quick-flowing stream.

Colonel Hayward took off his hat as he came up. This was to him an everyday action, but to her an unusual grace, a homage which only lately had ever been given to her, and which she esteemed disproportionately as a sign of special chivalry. It brought the colour to her cheeks, which ebbed again the moment after in the fluctuations of her anxiety. The old Colonel looked very anxious too; his face was agitated, and paler than usual. When he came up to her he stopped. 'I don't think,' he said, 'that we were ever introduced to each other; but still—— You have been taking a walk this fine morning?'

'The holidays have just begun, sir,' said Joyce respectfully. 'This is the first day: and though I am very fond of my work, freedom is sweet at first.'

'Only at first?'

'It is always sweet,' she said, with a smile; 'but never so delicious as the first day.'

Their hearts were not in this light talk, and here it came to an end. He had turned with her, and they were walking along side by side. Great anxiety—tremulous and breathless suspense—were in the minds of both on the same subject—and yet they regarded it in aspects so different! The soft transparent shadow of the hedge kept them from all the flicker of light and movement outside, giving a sort of *recueillement*, a calm of gravity and stillness, to the two figures. Had they been in a picture, there could have been no better title for it than ‘The Telling of the Secret.’ But yet there was no secret told. He was absorbed in his own thoughts, and unconscious of the wistful looks which she gave him timidly from time to time. At last he turned upon her, and asked the strangest question, with a tremor and quiver in all his big frame.

‘Do you remember your mother?’ he said.

‘My mother!’ The sudden shock brought a wave of colour over her. ‘Oh, sir,’ said Joyce, ‘how could I remember her? for she died when I was born.’

‘True, true—I had forgotten that,’ he said, with an air of confusion. Then added—‘You must forgive me. My mind was full——’

Of what was his mind full? He fell silent after this, and for some time no more was said. But it gradually came to be impossible to Joyce to keep silence. She turned to him, scarcely seeing him in the rush of blood that went to her head.

‘Did you know my mother?’ she said. ‘Oh, sir, will you tell me? Do you know who she was?’

‘I can’t tell—I can’t tell,’ he said, shaking his head. ‘It may be all a mistake. We must not make too sure.’

‘Then you think——’ she cried, and stopped, and looked at him, searching his face for his meaning—the anxious open face which was held before her like a book—though he did not look at her in return. She put her hand, with a light momentary touch, on his arm. ‘Perhaps you don’t know,’ she said hurriedly, ‘that I have things of hers—things she left—that would settle it—that would show you——’

He made a little gesture of assent, waving his hand. 'My wife is there: that is what keeps me in this suspense.'

'Where? Where?'

He pointed vaguely in the direction of Joyce's home. 'She has gone—to see everything,' he said.

For the moment a flash of sudden anger came to the eyes of Joyce. 'They are all mine!' she cried. 'It was to me she ought to have come. I am the one chiefly concerned!' Then the flash quenched itself, and her look grew soft and wistful once more. 'Oh, sir,' she said, 'if it was the Joyce you thought—if it was her you supposed—who was she? To tell me that, even if it should turn out all different, would do no harm.'

'It would do no good either,' he said: then turned round to her, and took her hand between his two large brown hands, which were trembling. 'You are very like her,' he said,—'so like her that I am forced to believe. She looked just as you are doing when I saw her last. Some relationship there must be—there must be!' Here he dropped her hand again, as if he had not

known that he held it. 'There was wrong done to her—the Joyce I mean. She was made very unhappy ; but no wrong was meant on—on my—on—on *his* part. Would you really like to hear the story ? But it may turn out to be nothing—to have nothing to do with you.'

'Oh, tell me ; it will fill up the time ; it will ease the suspense.'

'That is what I feel,' he said ; 'and you will keep the secret—that is, there is no secret ; it is only what happened to——what happened long, long ago—to—to one of my friends : you understand,' he said tremulously, but with an effort to be very firm, looking at her, 'to—one of my friends.'

Joyce made a sign of assent, too much absorbed in what she was about to hear to think what this warmth of asseveration meant. It was a relief to him to speak. It was like going over all the changes of the illness when a beloved sufferer lies between life and death.

'They met,' he said, 'abroad, at a foreign station.' She was very young. She was with people that were not kind to her. They

married in a great hurry, without proper precautions, without thinking that anything could be wrong. They came home soon after for her health, and I—I had to—I—I don't quite remember——' his voice seemed to die away in his throat; then with another effort he recovered it and went on—'Her husband had to leave her and go back—to his duty: and then she heard from some wicked person—oh, some wicked person!—God forgive her, for I can't—that it was not a true marriage. It was, it was! I protest to you no thought of harm—good Lord! nothing but love, honest love—and it was all right, all right, as it turned out.'

'But she thought — she had been deceived!' Joyce listened with her head drooping, keeping down the climbing sorrow in her throat, hardly able to find her voice.

'She was always hasty,' he said. 'I am not the one to blame her—oh no, no—it was not wonderful, perhaps, that she should believe. And letters to India were not then as now—they took so long a time; and something happened to delay the answer. It was

what you call nobody's fault—only an accident—an accident that cost——'

'You are very, very kind—oh, you are kind; you speak as if you had felt for her with all your heart—as if she had been your very own.'

He gave her a startled look, and made a momentary pause: then he proceeded, 'That's all,—all that anybody has known. She disappeared. His letter came back to him. He could not get home to search for her. It had to be trusted to others. After years, when I came back, I—I—but nothing could ever be found.'

'Sir,' said Joyce, gasping a little to keep down her sobs, 'I think that must have been my mother. I—think it must be. She begins in her letter to tell him—she calls him Henry—was that his name?'

The old Colonel made a noise in his throat which sounded like a sob too: he nodded his head in assent, as if he could not speak.

'She begins to tell him—is he living still?'

This question had the strangest effect

upon Colonel Hayward. He turned round upon her, steadying himself, looking her in the face, with momentary wonder and something like indignation ; then the energy died out of him all at once, and he nodded his head again.

‘My father! then I have a father,’ said Joyce, with a voice as soft and tender as a dove’s. She was not now paying any attention to him or his looks, but was entirely absorbed in this new wonderful discovery of her own.

But he started with a sudden cry—‘Good God!’ as if something new—something too astounding to understand—had flashed upon him. Her father! why, so it was!—so he was—— He had thought of no subject but this for days, and yet this point of view had not opened upon him. They had reached the head of the lane, and were now in the village street, turned towards the cottage in which Joyce had lived all her life, and near enough to see the light little figure of Mrs. Hayward standing at the door. This caught his attention, but not hers. For Joyce had plunged suddenly with a new impulse back

into the enchanted country of her dreams. A father—and one who had done no wrong—who was not to blame—a living father! It was only when she turned to Colonel Hayward, after the first bound of exhilaration and breathless pleasure, to ask him, clasping her hands unconsciously, ‘Who is my father?’ that she saw the extraordinary commotion in his face. He was looking at her, and yet his eyes made quick voyages to and from his wife. The lines of his face had all melted into what Joyce felt to be the ‘kindest’ look she had ever met. And yet there was alarm and boundless anxiety in it. He looked as if he did not hear her question, but suddenly laid his hand upon hers, and gave it a strong momentary pressure. ‘I must know first. I must speak to my wife,’ he said incoherently. ‘God bless you!—I must ask Elizabeth. You must wait: I must speak to Elizabeth. But God bless you, my dear!’

He was already gone, hastening with long steps up the street. The thought passed through Joyce’s mind that this must have been a dear friend,—some one, perhaps, who

had loved her mother : and a man with the tenderest heart. There was something in his 'God bless you' which seemed to fall upon her like the dew—a true blessing ; the blessing of one who had always been her friend, though she had never known him. She did not hurry to follow him to satisfy herself, but went on quietly at her usual pace, looking at the old gentleman's long swift steps, and thinking of a camel going over the ground. He was from the East, too ; and he devoured the way, hastening to the little figure which had perceived and which was waiting for him. Joyce had the faculty of youth to remark all this, yet keep up her own thoughts at the same time. She saw old Janet standing at the door looking out, with the hem of her apron in her hand, which was her gesture when her mind was much occupied or troubled : and the little lady in the street standing waiting, and then, her own old friend, the Colonel, hurrying up, putting his arm within the lady's, leading her away with his head bent over her. There was a certain amusement in it all, which floated on the surface of the great excite-

ment and wonder and delight of the discovery she had made. A father; and a dear old friend, the kindest, the most sympathetic, who blessed her, and who had a right to bless her, having loved (she could not doubt it) her mother before her.

Joyce did not know what the next disclosure might be,—did not think for the moment that, whatever it was, it must change the whole tenor of her life. Nor did she think that there was still a doubt in it,—that it might yet come to nothing, as he had said. Oh no, it could not come to nothing; everything pieced in to the story. The doubt with which Janet had always chilled her, that a young creature disappearing so utterly, with no one to care for her, no one to inquire after her, must have had a story in which shame was involved—how completely was it dissipated and explained by this real tale! Oh, no shame! she had felt sure there could not be shame—nothing but the cruel distance, the fatal accident that had delayed the letter, those strange elements of uncertainty which mix in every mortal story, which (Joyce remembered from the reading which had

hitherto been her life) the ancients called fate. And what could they be called but fate? If it had come in time that letter! as letters which mean nothing, which are of no consequence, come every day—and yet he had said the delay was nobody's fault. Was it less fatal, less fateful than those incidents that lead towards the end of a tragedy in the poets? and this was a tragedy. Oh, how sad, how pitiful, to the Joyce of twenty years ago! but not to our Joyce, who suddenly found this July morning her vague dreams of youth, her fancies that had no foundation, coming true.

'You've been a long time away,' said Janet from the door. She had watched Joyce's approach until they were within a few steps of each other, when she had suddenly withdrawn her eyes, and taken to examining the hem of her apron, which she laid down and pinched between her fingers, as if preparing it to be hemmed over again. The corners of Janet's mouth were drawn down, and a line or two marked in her forehead, as when she was angry and about to scold her nursling. 'I could wuss,' she said,

‘that ye wouldna stravaig away in the mornin’ without a piece or onything to sustain ye, and maybe getting your death o’ cauld, sittin’ on the grass.’

‘It is the first day of the holidays, granny,’ said Joyce. She came in smiling, and put down her book, and going up to her faithful guardian, put an arm round her, and laid her cheek against hers. Caresses are rare in a Scotch peasant’s house. Janet half turned away her own wrinkled cheek. The intensity of the love within her rose into a heat which simulated wrath.

‘I’m no a wean to be made o’. I like nane o’ your phrasin’s. I like when folk do as I bid them, and make nae steer.’

‘Oh, granny,’ said Joyce, ‘but my heart is so full, and I have so much to tell you.’

‘What can ye have to tell me? I have maybe mair to tell you than ever ye thought upon; and as for a full heart, how can the like of you, with a’ your life before ye, ken what that means?’

‘Granny, I have had a long talk with that gentleman—the gentleman that thought he knew my mother.’

‘And what had he to say to you? I’m thinking your mother has been just killed among them. That’s my opinion. A poor young solitary thing, that had naebody to stand up for her. And sae will ye be if ye lippen to them,’ cried Janet, suddenly sitting down and covering her face with her apron, —‘sae will ye be. Ye are weel off now, though maybe ye dinna think sae.’

‘Granny, have I ever given you any reason to say that?’

Janet withdrew her apron from her eyes. Her eyes were red with that burden of tears which age cannot shed like youth. The passion of love and grief which overflowed her being could only get vent in this irritation and querulous impatience. Her long upper lip quivered, a hot moisture glistened on the edges of her eyelids. She looked at the young creature, standing half on the defensive before this sudden attack, yet half disposed to meet it with tender laughter and jest. ‘Oh, ye can make licht o’t,’ she cried. ‘What is’t to you? just the life ye’ve aye been craving for—aye craving for,—ye canna say nay. But to me what is it?’ said the old

woman. 'It's just death. It's waur than death; it's just lingerin', and longin', and frettin' wi' my Maker for what I canna have! When we took ye to our airms, a bit helpless bairn, maybe there was that in our hearts that said the Lord was our debtor to make it up to us. But them that think sae will find themselves sair mista'en; for He has just waited and waited till ye had come to your flower and were our pride! And now the fiat has gaen forth, no' when ye were a little bairn; and I aye said, "Haud a loose grip!" But now that a' the danger seemed overpast, now that—wheesht!' cried Janet suddenly, coming to an abrupt pause. In the silence that followed they heard a slow and heavy foot, making long and measured steps, advancing gradually. They heard that among many others, for it was the time when the labourers were coming home to dinner; but to Janet and Joyce there was no mistaking the one tread among so many. Janet got up hurriedly from the chair. 'Wheesht! no' a word before him; it's time enough when it comes,' she said. Joyce had not waited even for this, but had begun to lay the table, so that Peter when he came in

should find everything ready. He came in with his usual air of broadly smiling expectation, and took his bonnet from his grizzled red locks, which was a fashion Joyce had taught him, as he stepped across the threshold. 'It's awfu' warm the day,' were his first words, as he went in, notwithstanding, and placed himself in the big chair near the fire. The fire was the household centre whether it was cold or warm. 'So you've gotten the play?' he added, beaming upon Joyce, awaiting something which should make him open his mouth in one of those big brief laughs that brought the water to his eyes. It was not necessary that it should be witty or clever. Joyce was wit and cleverness embodied to her foster-father. When she opened her lips his soul was satisfied.

And before Peter the cloud disappeared like magic. Janet was cheerful, and Joyce like everyday. They listened to his talk about the ripening corn, and where it was full in the ear, and where stubby, and about the Irish shearers that will be down upon us like locusts afore we ken,—'and a wheen Hieland cattle too,' said Peter, who was not favourable

to the Celts. Then the broth was put on the table and the blessing said, and the humble dinner eaten as it had been for years in the little family which held together by nature, and which, so far as had appeared, nothing could ever divide.

CHAPTER IX

THE Colonel took his wife's arm, drawing her close to him, leaning over her little figure : he could hold her closer in this way, and take her strength more completely into his own than if she had taken his arm in the ordinary fashion. But she gave him but an uncertain support for the first time in their life. The group made up of those two figures linked into one, making but one shadow, tottered as they set out. And she made no reply to his look, to the urgent clasp of his arm on hers, until they had passed out of the village street, and gained the quiet and stillness of the avenue within the gates. Then Elizabeth—unprecedented action!—detached herself almost with impatience. 'You hurt me, Henry,' she said quickly, with a sharp intolerance in her tone. This brought the painful

excitement of the morning to a climax ; for when had she complained before ?

‘My dear!’ he cried, with a tone of compunction and horror, ‘I—hurt you?’ as if he had been accused of high treason and brutal cruelty combined.

This accent of amazed contrition brought Mrs Hayward to herself. ‘Oh no, Henry,’ she said, ‘you did not hurt me at all. I am not fit to speak to any good Christian. I am a wretched creature, full of envy, and malice, and all uncharitableness. Let me alone a little till I come to myself.’

The Colonel gave her a piteous look. ‘As long as you please, my dear,’ he said ; then added apologetically, ‘I can’t help feeling very anxious. There is more in this than meets the eye—there is more in it than I realised : there is—the—the young lady, Elizabeth.’

In spite of herself his wife looked at him with a momentary scorn which was almost fierce. ‘Do you mean to say that this is the first time you have thought of that?’

The Colonel was very apologetic. ‘I am afraid I am dense,’ he said ; ‘but, my dear, I

always like to wait till I know what you think—and as yet you have said nothing. How was I to suppose——’ Here he broke off, seeing in his wife’s eyes more than he could read all at once, and with a tremulous movement laid his hand again upon her arm. ‘What is it?’ he said.

She was tremulous too, but in a different fashion. She began to open out a little parcel which she held in her hand quickly, almost with indignation. ‘You will know what to think when you see your own hand and name,’ she said. ‘There! that’s been laid up waiting for me—fancy! for *me* to find it—these twenty years.’

The Colonel looked at the yellow old letters with increasing agitation, but no increase of understanding. ‘What is it?’ he said. ‘What does it mean, Elizabeth? I did not go through all this, only to come to an old letter of my own at the last.’

The little woman stamped her foot with a kind of fury. ‘I think you are determined not to understand,’ she cried. ‘Look who that letter is addressed to—look at this other along with it; for God’s sake, Henry, don’t

worry me any more ! don't ask what I think : look at them for yourself.'

He did look, but with so bewildered an expression that compassion overcame her. She took the papers over which he was puzzling, looking at his own writing vaguely, with a quick impatient movement.

'You have been right, quite right in your conjectures,' she said ; 'the poor girl that came here alone twenty years ago, and had her baby, and went wrong in her head, and died, was your poor young wife, Joyce Hayward, Henry. There is your letter to her—not the kind of letter I should have thought you would have written ; and there is hers to you, a voice out of the grave. Don't look at me in that pitiful way. I don't expect you to read it here. Go away to your own room or into the woods, Henry, and read your wife's letter. Go away ! go away ! and do this for yourself without me. I am not the person,' cried Mrs. Hayward, thrusting them into his hands, and pushing him impatiently from her,— 'I am not the person to read your wife's letter. Go away ! go away !'

'My wife's letter,' he said, with a moment-

ary look of awe and trouble. Then suddenly he put one arm round her, and, half sobbing, said, 'Twenty years since! it has always been right, all the time, my darling, between you and me.'

'Oh, Henry!—is that all you think of at such a moment?'

He patted her shoulder with his large and unsteady hand, and held her close. 'If it is not all, it's the first and foremost,' he said; 'you will never again, Elizabeth, never any more——'

'Oh, go away! go away!' she cried, stamping her foot upon the path. There were tears in her eyes, half love and softness, half impatience and fury. She pushed him away from her with all her strength, and turning her back upon him, walked quickly through the trees and across the park in the full sunshine. She was distracted with conflicting sentiments, unwilling to be melted, yet touched to the heart; determined that he should go back by himself into that distant past with which she had nothing to do, yet scarcely able to resist the habit of doing everything for him, of encountering even that

for him. She hurried along until she had got within the shade of a belt of wood, and out of sight of the spot where she had left her husband. Here Mrs. Hayward suddenly sat down upon the grass, and hid her face in her hands. Sometimes it became necessary for her, even in the ordinary course of affairs, to escape for a moment now and then from the Colonel's constant demands. But to-day it seemed to her that she must do this or die. The sudden summons, the long journey, the agitating news, the commission so suddenly put into her hands, the discovery she had made, all united had overwhelmed her at last. She cried heartily, as she did everything, with an abundant natural overflow of feeling which relieved and exhausted her, and a sensation underneath all which she could not define whether it was happiness or pain.

This Joyce, who had been from the beginning the shadow upon her married life, in despite of whose possible claims she had married, and whom she had regarded all through with a mixture of pity and indignation and fear, roused in her, dead, almost as strong feelings as if she had been a living

claimant to the name and place which were hers. The very fact that the poor girl's story was so pitiful, and that nothing could take away the interest and compassion roused by the image of a young forsaken creature dying so miserably with no one near who loved her, was to Mrs. Hayward at this moment an additional aggravation, adding a pang to all the rest. And yet there was in it an unspeakable relief; and the fact that this, and not any revival of the romance of his youth, had been her husband's first thought, was exquisite to her, yet with a certain acrid sweetness, not unmingled with pain and the contradictoriness of a highly sensitive, impatient, and intolerant soul, sharply conscious of every complication. For notwithstanding her strong personal share in the matter, it was clear to Elizabeth that he ought to have thought of the other, the poor girl in her youth and misery, first; and that the sight of her letter, the words written in her anguish, coming to him as it were from her grave, across the silence of twenty years, ought to have transported the man to whom these words were addressed out of all recollection

of the present,—out of everything save that tragedy of which, however innocently, he was the cause. She could not but feel it sweet that it was herself and not the dead Joyce of whom in reality he had thought: yet, in a manner, she resented it, and was wounded by it as a thing against nature which ought not to have been. ‘That is all that a man’s love is worth,’ she said to herself. ‘He cost her her life, and it is me he thinks of, who am well and strong, and in no trouble.’ And yet it went to her heart that he should have so thought.

In this keen complication of feeling, Mrs. Hayward, for the time, could realise nothing else. It was not possible to think of the dead girl and herself but as rivals: and this, too, gave her a pang. How mean, how ungenerous, how miserable it was! Such a story in a book, much more in real life, would have moved her to warm tears; but in this, which touched herself so closely, she could feel no true pity. It was her rival; it was one who had come before her, whose shadow had lain upon her life and darkened it, who even now was bringing trouble into it—

trouble of which it was impossible to fathom the full extent. How could there be tenderness where such sharp antagonism was? And yet, how poor, how small, how petty, how unworthy was the feeling!

In these contrarieties her mind was caught, and thrilled with sharp vexation, shame, scorn of herself, and sense of that profound vanity of human things which makes the present in its pettiness so much greater than the past, and dims and obliterates everything that is over. To think that such a tragedy had been, and that those who were most concerned thought of their poor share in it first, and not of her who was the victim! That contradiction of all that was most true and just, that infidelity which is in every human thing, the callousness and egotism which ran through the best, jarred her with a discord which was in herself as well as in all the rest. But when she had cried her heart out, Mrs. Hayward, as was natural, exhausted that first poignant sensation, and came to contemplate, apart from all that was past, the present condition of affairs, which was not more consolatory. Indeed, when, putting

the tragedy of the poor Joyce who was dead out of her mind, she returned to the present, the figure of the living Joyce suddenly rose before her with a sharp distinctness that made her spring to her feet as a soldier springs to his weapon when suddenly confronted by an enemy. Mrs. Hayward had never seen Joyce, so that this figure was purely imaginary which rose before her, with a stinging touch, reminding her that here was something which was not past but present, a reality,—no affair of memory or sentiment, but a difficulty real and tangible, standing straight before her, not to be passed by or forgotten. She sprang up as if to arms, to meet the new antagonist who thus presented herself, and must be met, but not with arms in hand, nor as an antagonist at all. Joyce herself would scarcely have been so terrible to encounter as Joyce's child thus coming between her husband and herself, taking possession of the foreground of their existence whether they would or not. What Mrs. Hayward would be called upon to do would be—not to retire before this new actor in her existence,

not to withdraw and leave the field as she had always felt it possible she might have to do, but to receive, to live with,—good heavens! perhaps to love her! Yes; no doubt this was what the Colonel would want; he would require her to love this girl who was his child. He would take it for granted that she must do so; he would innocently lay all the burden upon her, and force her into a maternity which nature had not required of her. A mother! ah yes, she could have been a mother indeed had God willed it so; but to produce that undeveloped side of her, that capacity which she had been so often tempted to think Providence had wronged her by leaving in abeyance, for the benefit of this country girl, this Scotch peasant, with all her crude education, her conceit (no doubt) of superiority, her odious schoolmistress's training!

Mrs. Hayward could not sit still and look calmly at what was before her. There was something intolerable in it, which stung her into energy, which made her feel the necessity of being up and doing, of making a stand against misfortune. However much she

might resent and resist in her private soul, she would have to do this thing, and put on a semblance of doing it with, not against, her own will and liking. Talk of the contradictions of fate! they seemed to be all grouped together in this problem which she had to work out. If the child had been a boy, the Colonel would have been compelled more or less to take the charge upon himself. There would have been school or college, or the necessities of a profession, to occupy the newcomer; but that it should be a girl—a girl, a young woman, a creature entirely within the sphere of Colonel Hayward's wife, whose business it would be not only *to be a mother to her, but to receive her as a companion, to amend her manners, to watch over all her proceedings, to take the responsibility night and day!*

Mrs. Hayward felt that she could have put up with a boy. He would not have been her business so much as his father's, and he would not for ever and ever have recalled his mother, and put her in mind of all that had been, and of all she herself had already borne. For though she had accepted the

position knowing all that was involved, and though it was, so to speak, her own fault that she had encountered these difficulties, still there could be no doubt that she had for years had much to bear ; and now what a climax, what a crown to everything ! A second Joyce, no doubt, with all the head-strong qualities which had made the first Joyce spoil her own life and the lives of others, with all the disadvantages of her peasant training, of her education even, which would be rather worse than ignorance. Mrs. Hayward conjured up before her the image of a pupil-teacher, a good girl striving for examinations, immaculate in spelling, thinking of everything as the subject of a lesson : looking up with awe to the inspector, with reverence to some little prig of a school-master, a girl with neat collars and cuffs, knowing her own condition in life, and very respectful to her superiors : or else bumptious, and standing upon her dignity as an educated person, which Mrs. Hayward had heard was more the way of the Scotch. In either point of view what a prospect, what a companion !

And the Colonel's wife knew how that

good man would conduct himself. He would remonstrate with her if the girl were *gauche*, or if she were disagreeable and presuming. He would say, 'You must tell her'—'you must make her do so-and-so.' If his taste was shocked, if the girl turned out to be very dreadful, he himself, who ought to know so much better, would throw all the blame upon her. Or perhaps, which would be still more intolerable, his eyes would be blinded, and he would see nothing that was not beautiful and amiable in his child. With a sudden flush of irritation, Mrs. Hayward felt that this would be more unbearable still. Joyce had been the bugbear of his life in the past; what if Joyce were to be the model, the example of every good quality, the admiration and delight of his life to come: and she herself, the stepmother, the half-rival, half-tyrant, the one who would not appreciate the new heroine! No one was so ready as Elizabeth to perceive all her husband's excellent qualities. He was good as an angel or a child—there was no soil in him. His kindness, his tenderness, his generous heart, his innocent life, were her pride and

delight. And the perpetual appeal which he made to her, the helplessness with which he flung himself upon her for inspiration and counsel, made him dearer still. She herself laughed and sometimes frowned at the devout aspiration, 'If only Elizabeth were here!' for which all his friends smiled at the Colonel; but at the same time it warmed her heart. And yet there was no one in the world so feelingly alive to the irritations and vexations which were involved in this supreme helplessness and trust. There were moments when he worried her almost beyond endurance. She had to be perpetually on the watch. She had to subdue herself and forget herself, and make a thousand daily sacrifices to the man whom she ruled absolutely, and who was ready at her fiat almost to live or die. But of all intolerable things, that which was most intolerable was the suggestion that he might in this matter judge for himself without her aid,—that he might admit this strange girl into his heart, and place her on the pinnacle which had hitherto been sacred to Elizabeth alone.

She had seated herself on a grassy bank

under the shade of the trees which skirted one side of the park of Bellendean. Instinctively she had chosen a spot where there was 'a view.' How many such spots are there to which preoccupied people, with something to think out, resort half unawares, and all-unconscious of the landscape spread before them! Edinburgh, gray in the distance, with her crags and towers, shone through the opening carefully cut in the trees, the angle of the castled rock standing forth boldly against the dimness of the smoke behind; and the air was so clear, and the atmosphere so still, that while Mrs. Hayward sat there the sound of the gun which regulates the time for all Edinburgh—the gun fired from the Castle at one o'clock—boomed through the distance with a sudden shock which made her start. She was not a fanciful woman, nor given to metaphors. But there was something in the peace of the landscape, the summer quiet, broken only by the hum of insects and rustle of the waving boughs, the distant town too far off to add a note to that soft breathing of nature, which made a centre to the picture and no more—when the air

was suddenly rent by the harsh and fatal sound of the gun, making the spectator start—which was to her like an emblematic representation of what had happened to herself. To be sure, if she had but thought of it, that voice of war had been tamed into a service of domestic peace, a sound as innocent as chanticleer; but Mrs. Hayward was a stranger, and was unaware of this. As she rose up hurriedly, startled by the shock in the air, she saw her husband coming towards her across the sunshine. He was moving like a man in a dream, moving instinctively towards where she was, but otherwise unconscious where he was going, unaware of the little heights and hollows, stumbling over the stump of a tree that came in his way. The sight of his abstraction brought her back to herself. He came up to her, and held out the little packet in his hand.

‘Put them away,’ he said hoarsely; ‘lock them up in some sure place, Elizabeth. To think all that should have been going on, and I ignorant—oh, as ignorant as the babe unborn!’

‘How could you know when she never

told you?' Mrs. Hayward cried quickly, instinctively taking his part, even against himself. He put his large hand upon her small shoulder, and patted her with a deprecating, soothing touch, as if the wrong and the sorrow were not his but hers.

'But she meant us to know—that letter, if I had ever got it! She was young and foolish, young and foolish. Put it away, my dear; don't destroy it, but lock it away safe, and let us think of it no more.'

'That is impossible, Henry. You must think of it, in justice to her—poor thing;' this Mrs. Hayward said unwillingly, from a sense of what was right and fitting, and with a compunction in her heart,—'and for the sake,' she added firmly, after a moment, 'of your child.'

'The girl,' he said vaguely. Then he came closer to her, and put his arm within hers. 'You will see to all that, Elizabeth. You understand these sort of things better than I do. It would be very awkward for me, you know, a man.' To describe the persuasive tone, the ingratiating gesture with which, in his simplicity, he put this burden

upon her, would be impossible. Even she, well as she knew him, was struck with surprise—a surprise which was half happiness and half indignation.

‘Henry!’ she cried, resisting the appealing touch, ‘have you no heart for your own child?’

He leant upon her for a moment, drawing as it seemed her whole little person, and all her energy and strength, into himself. ‘I’m all upset, Elizabeth. I don’t know what I have, whether heart or anything else—except you, my dear, except you. Everything will go right as long as I have you.’

CHAPTER X

IN the perplexity of this extraordinary crisis they both went, without another word, 'home': though it was no more home than these wonderful new circumstances were the course of everyday. If we were to prophesy the conduct of human creatures in moments of great emotion by what would seem probable, or even natural, how far from the fact we should be! Colonel Hayward, a man of the tenderest heart and warmest affections, suddenly discovers that he has a child—a child by whose appearance, and everything about her, he has been pleased and attracted, the child of his first love, his young wife to whose cruel death he has contributed, though unwittingly, unintentionally, meaning no evil. Would not all ordinary means of conveyance be too slow,

all obstacles as nothing in his way, the very movement of the world arrested till he had taken this abandoned child into his arms, and assured her of his penitence, his joy, his love? But nothing could be further from his actual action. He went back to Bellen-dean with a feeling that he would perhaps know better what to do were he within the four walls of a room where he could shut himself and be alone. It would be easier to think there than in the park, where everything was in perpetual motion, leaves rustling, branches waving, birds singing,—the whole world astir. ‘If we were only in our own room,’ he said to his wife, ‘we could think—what it was best to do.’

She said nothing, but she longed also for the quiet and shelter of that room. She recognised, as indeed she might have done from the first, that whatever had to be done, it was she that must do it. And Mrs. Hayward was entirely *dépaysée*, and did not know how to manage this business. Janet Matheson was a new species to a woman who had done a great deal of parish work, and was not unacquainted

with the ordinary ways of managing 'the poor.' She did not understand how to deal with that proud old woman, to whom she could not offer any recompense, whom she would scarcely dare even to thank for her 'kindness.' Janet had repudiated that injurious word, and Mrs. Hayward felt that it would be easier to offer money to Mrs. Bellendean than to this extraordinary cottager. To be sure, that was nothing—a trifle not worth consideration in face of the other question, of Joyce herself, who would have to be adopted, removed from the cottage, taken home as Miss Hayward, a new, and perhaps soon the most important, member of the family. Elizabeth's heart beat as it had never done before, scarcely even when she married Captain Hayward, accepting all the risks, taking him and his incoherent story at a terrible venture. That was an undertaking grave enough, but this was more terrible still. She felt, too, that she would be thankful to get into the quiet of her own room to think it over, to decide what she should best do.

This, however, was more easily said than done. The anxious pair were met in the

hall by Mrs. Bellendean with looks as anxious as their own. She was breathless with interest, expectation, and excitement: and came up to them in a fever of eagerness, which, to Mrs. Hayward at least, seemed quite unnecessary, holding out a hand to each. 'Well?' she cried, as if their secrets were hers, and her interest as legitimate as their own. In short, the pair, who were very grave and preoccupied, having exhausted the first passion of the discovery, had much less appearance of excitement and expectation than this lady, who had nothing whatever to do with it. A shade of disappointment crossed her face when she saw their grave looks; but Mrs. Bellendean's perceptions were lively, and she perceived at the same moment tokens of agitation in the old Colonel's face which reassured her. It would have been too much if, after all her highly-raised expectations, nothing had happened at all.

'Come into my room,' she said quickly; 'we have half an hour before luncheon, and there we shall be quite undisturbed.' She led the way with a rapidity that made it impossible even to protest, and opening the

door, swept them in before her, and drew an easy-chair forward for Mrs. Hayward. 'Now,' she said, 'tell me! You have found out something, I can see.'

They looked at each other,—Mrs. Hayward with the liveliest inclination to tell the lady, whom she scarcely knew, that their affairs were their own. It would have been a little relief to her feelings could she have done so; but this was just the moment, as she knew very well, in which the Colonel was sure to come to the front.

'Yes,' he said, with a sigh, in which there was distinct relief. (He found it so easy to relieve himself in that way!) 'We have found out—all we wanted, more than we expected. Apart from all other circumstances, this is a memorable visit to me, Mrs. Bellendean. We have found—or rather Elizabeth has found—— She is always my resource in everything——'

'What?' cried Mrs. Bellendean, clasping her hands. 'Please excuse me—I am so anxious. Something about Joyce?'

'You must understand that I had no notion of it, no idea of it all the time. I was

as ignorant—— There may have been things in which I was to blame—though never with any meaning: but of this I had no idea—none: she never gave me the slightest hint—never the least,’ said the Colonel earnestly. ‘How could I imagine for a moment—when she never said a word?’

Mrs. Bellendean looked at Mrs. Hayward with an appeal for help, but she gave a smile and glance of sympathy to the Colonel, who seemed to want them most. His wife sat very straight, with her shoulders square, and her feet just visible beneath her gown—very firm little feet, set down steadily, one of them beating a faint tattoo of impatience on the carpet. She was all resistance, intending, it was apparent, to reveal as little as possible: but the Colonel, though his style was involved, was most willing to explain.

‘It is,’ he said, ‘my dear lady, I assure you, as much a wonder and revelation to me as to any one. I never thought of such a possibility—never. Elizabeth knows that nothing was further from my mind.’

‘Henry,’ said his wife suddenly, ‘you have been very much agitated this morning. All

these old stories coming up again have given you a shake. Go up, my dear, to your room, and I will tell Mrs. Bellendean all that she cares to hear.'

'Eh? do you think so, Elizabeth? I *have* got a shake. It agitates a man very much to be carried back twenty years. Perhaps you are right: you can explain everything—much better than I can—much better always; and if Mrs. Bellendean thinks I am to blame, she need not be embarrassed about it, as she might be before me. I think you are right, as you always are. And perhaps she will give you some good advice, my love, as to what we ought to do.'

'I am sure I shall not think you to blame, Colonel Hayward,' cried Mrs. Bellendean, with that impulse of general amiability which completed the exasperation with which Elizabeth sat looking on.

'Yes, no doubt, she will give me good advice,' she said, with irrepressible irritation; 'oh, no doubt, no doubt!—most people do. Henry, take mine for the moment, and go upstairs and rest a little. Remember you have to meet all the gentlemen at luncheon:

and after that there will be a great deal to do.'

'I think I will, my dear,' Colonel Hayward said: but he paused again at the door with renewed apologies and doubts—'if Mrs. Bellendean will not think it rude, and even cowardly, of me, Elizabeth, to leave all the explanations to you.'

Finally, when Mrs. Bellendean had assured him that she would not do so, he withdrew slowly, not half sure that, after all, he ought not to return and take the task of the explanation into his own hands. There was not a word said between the ladies until the sound of his steps, a little hesitating at first, as if he had half a mind to come back, had grown firmer, and at last died away. Then Mrs. Hayward for the first time looked at the mistress of the house, who, half amused, half annoyed, and full of anxiety and expectation, had been looking at her, as keenly as politeness permitted, from every point of view.

'My husband has been very much agitated—you will not wonder when I tell you all; and he is never very good at telling his own

story. A man who can do—what he can do—may be excused if he is a little deficient in words.'

She spoke quickly, almost sharply, with a little air of defiance, yet with moisture in her eyes.

'Surely,' said Mrs. Bellendean, 'we know what Colonel Hayward is ; but pardon me, it was a much less matter—it was about Joyce I wanted to know.'

'The one story cannot be told without the other. My husband,' said Mrs. Hayward, with a long breath, 'had been married before—before he married me. He had married very hurriedly a young lady who came out to some distant relations in India. They were at a small station out of the way. She was not happy, and he married her in a great hurry. Afterwards, when she was in England by herself, having come home for her health, some wicked person put it into the poor thing's head that her marriage was not a good one. She was fool enough to believe it, though she knew Henry. Forgive me if I speak a little hastily. She ought to have known better, knowing him ; but some

people never know you, though you live by their side a hundred years.'

She stopped to exhale another long breath of excitement and agitation. It was cruel to impute blame to the poor dead girl, and she felt this, but could not refrain.

'And suddenly, after one letter full of complaint and reproach, she wrote no more. He was in active service, and could not get home. It was not so easy then to come home on leave. He wrote again and again, and when he got no answer, employed people to find her out. I can't tell you all the things that were done—everything, so far as he knew how to do it. I didn't know him then. I daresay he wasted a great deal of money without getting hold of the right people. He never heard anything more of her, never a word, till the other day.'

'Then that poor young creature was—— And Joyce—Joyce!—who is Joyce? Mrs. Hayward, do you mean really that Joyce——'

'Joyce—was his first wife: and this girl—who has the same name,—I have not seen her, I don't know her, I can express no

feeling about her,—this young lady is my husband's daughter, Mrs. Bellendean.'

'Colonel Hayward's daughter!' Mrs. Bellendean sprang to her feet in her surprise and excitement. She threw up her hands in wonder and delight and sympathy, her eyes glittered and shone, a flush of feeling came over her. Any spectator who had seen the two ladies at this moment would have concluded naturally that it was Mrs. Bellendean who was the person chiefly concerned, while the little woman seated opposite to her was a somewhat cynical looker-on, to whom it was apparent that the warmth of feeling thus displayed was not quite genuine. The Colonel's wife was moved by no enthusiasm. She sat rigid, motionless, except for that one foot, which continued to beat upon the carpet a little impatient measure of its own.

'Oh,' cried Mrs. Bellendean, 'I always knew it! One may deceive one's self about many people, but there was no possibility with Joyce. She was—she is—I never saw any one like her—quite, quite unprecedented in such a place as this: like nobody about her—a girl whom any one might be proud of

—a girl who—oh yes, yes! you are right in calling her a young lady. She could be nothing less. I always knew it was so.'

'She is my husband's daughter,' said Mrs. Hayward, without moving a muscle. She remained unaffected by her companion's enthusiasm. She recognised it as part of the burden laid upon her that she should have to receive the outflowings of a rapture in which she had no share.

'And what did Joyce say?' asked the lady of Bellendean. 'And poor old Janet! oh, it will not be good news to her. But what did Joyce say? I should like to have been there; and why, why did not you bring her up to the house with you? But I see,—oh yes, it was better, it was kinder to leave her a little with the old people. The poor old people, God help them! Oh, Mrs. Hayward, there is no unmixed good in this world. It will kill old Janet and her old husband. There's no unmixed good.'

'No,' said Mrs. Hayward quietly. She sat like a little figure of stone, nothing moving in her, not a finger, not an eyelash,—nothing but the foot, still beating now and

then a sort of broken measure upon the floor.

Mrs. Bellendean sat down again when she had exhausted her first excitement. There is nothing that chills one's warmest feelings like the presence of a spectator who does not share one's satisfaction. Mrs. Hayward would have been that proverbial wet blanket, if there had not been in the very stiffness of her spectatorship signs of another and still more potent excitement of her own. Strong self-repression at the end comes to affect us more than any demonstration. Mrs. Bellendean was very quick, and perhaps felt it sooner than a less vivid intelligence might have done. She sat down, almost apologetically, and looked at her guest.

'I am afraid,' she said, faltering, 'you are not so glad as I am. I hope it is not anything in Joyce. I hope—she has not displeased you. If she has, I am sure, oh, I am very sure she did not mean it. It must have been—some mistake.'

'Mrs. Bellendean,' cried Elizabeth suddenly, 'I am sure you are very kind. You would not have invited me here as you have

done, without knowing anything of me, if you had not been kind. But perhaps you don't quite put yourself in my place. I did not mean to say anything on that subject, but my heart is full, and I can't help it. I married Colonel Hayward—he was only Captain Hayward then—knowing everything, and that it was possible, though not likely, that this wife of his might still be alive. It was a great venture to make. I have kept myself in the background always, not knowing—whether I had any real right to call myself Mrs. Hayward. Joyce has not been a name of good omen to me.'

'Dear Mrs. Hayward!' cried the impulsive woman before her, leaning over the table, holding out both her hands.

'No, don't praise me. I believe I ought to have been blamed instead; but, anyhow, I took the risk. And I have never repented it, though I did not know all that would be involved. And now, when we are growing old, and calm should succeed to all the storms, here is her daughter—with her name—not a child whom I could influence, who might get to be fond of me, but a woman, grown up,

educated in her way, clever :—all that makes it so much the worse. No! don't be sorry for me; I am a wicked woman, I ought not to feel so. Here I find her again, not a recollection, not an idea, but a grown-up girl, the same age as her mother. Joyce over again, always Joyce!'

Mrs. Bellendean did not know how to reply. She sat and gazed at the woman whom she wanted to console, who touched her, revolted her, horrified her all in one, and yet whose real emotion and pain she felt to the bottom of her sympathetic heart. Too much sympathy is perhaps as bad as too little. She was all excitement and delight for Joyce, and yet this other woman's trouble was too genuine not to move her. It was very natural too, and yet dreadful,—a pain to think of. 'I am sure,' she said, faltering, 'that when you know her better—when you begin to see what she is in herself: there is no one who does not like Joyce.'

Mrs. Hayward had got rid, in this interval, of a handful, so to speak, of hot, sudden tears. She was ashamed of them, angry with herself for being thus overcome,

and therefore could not be said to weep, or make any other affecting demonstration, but simply hurried off, threw from her angrily, these signs of a pang which she despised, which hurt her pride and her sense of what was seemly as much as it wrung her heart. She shook her head with a sudden angry laugh in the midst of her emotion. 'Don't you see? that is the worst of all,' she cried.

But at this moment, in the midst of this climax of pain, exasperation, self-disapproval, there arose in soft billows of sound, rising one after the other into all the corners of the great house, the sound of the gong. It reached all the members of the household, along the long corridors and round the gallery, roused Colonel Hayward from the softened and satisfied pause of feeling which his withdrawal upstairs had brought him, and called Mrs. Bellendean back from the wonderful problem of mingled sentiments in which she was embroiling herself, taking both sides at once, into the more natural feelings of the mistress of the house, whose presence is indispensable elsewhere. But she could not break off all at once this inter-

view, which was so very different from the ordinary talks between strangers. She hesitated even to rise up, conscious of the ludicrous anti-climax of this call to food addressed to people whose hearts were full of the most painful complications of life. At the same time, the sound of her guests trooping downstairs, and coming in from the grounds, with a murmur of voices, and footsteps in the hall, became every moment more and more clamant. She rose at last, and put her hand on Mrs. Hayward's shoulder. 'The gentlemen speak,' she said, 'of things that are solved walking. It will be so with you, dear Mrs. Hayward. It will clear up as you go on. Everything will become easier in the doing. Come now to luncheon.'

'I—to luncheon!—it would choke me,' cried Elizabeth, feeling in her impatience, and the universal contrariety of everything, as if this had been the last aggravation of all.

'No,' said Mrs. Bellendean, putting her arm through that of her guest; 'it will do you good, on the contrary: and the Colonel

will eat nothing if you are not there. You shall come in your bonnet as you are ; and Colonel Hayward will make a good luncheon.'

'I believe he is capable of it,' Mrs. Hayward cried.

CHAPTER XI

THE party was diminished, but still it was a large party. The dining-room at Bellen-dean was a long room lighted by a line of windows at one side in deep recesses, for the house was of antique depth and strength. The walls were hung with family portraits, a succession of large and imposing individuals, whose presence in uniform or in robes of law, contemplating seriously the doings of their successors, added dignity to the house, but did not do much to brighten or beautify the interior, save in the case of a few smaller portraits, which were from the delightful hand of Raeburn, and made a sunshine in a shady place. The long table, with its daylight whiteness and brightness, concentrated the light, however, and made the ornaments of the walls of less import-

ance ; and the cheerful crowd was too much occupied with its own affairs to notice the nervousness of the newcomer, the Colonel's wife, who had only made a brief appearance at breakfast to some of them, and attracted as little warmth of interest as a woman of her age generally does. She sat near Mr. Bellendean at the foot of the table, but as he was one of the men to whom it is necessary to a woman to be young and pretty, Mrs. Hayward had full opportunity to compose and calm herself with little interference from her host. She was separated almost by the length of the table from her husband, and consequently was safe from his anxious observation ; and in the bustle of the mid-day meal, and the murmur of talk around her, Mrs. Hayward found a sort of retirement for herself, and composed her mind. Her self-arguments ended in the ordinary fatalism with which people accept the inevitable. ' If it must be, it must be,' she said to herself. Perhaps it might not turn out so badly as she feared ; that vision of the pupil-teacher, the perfectly well-behaved, well-instructed girl, who would make her life a

burden, and destroy all the privacy and all the enjoyment of her home, was a terrible image: but the sight of so many cheerful faces gradually drove it away.

‘Who was I, Uncle Bellendean? I was a Saxon court lady. I was in attendance upon Queen Margaret. But she was not queen then; she was only princess, and an exile, don’t you know? We had all been nearly drowned, driven up from the Firth by the wind in the east.’

‘And where were you exiled from? and what were you doing in the Firth?’ said Mr. Bellendean, who was not perhaps thinking much of what he said.

‘Well I am sure,’ said Greta, with her soft Scotch intonation, ‘I don’t very well know; but Joyce does. She will tell you all about it if you ask her.’

‘This Joyce is a very alarming person. I hear her name wherever I turn. She seems the universal authority. I thought she must be an old governess; but I hear she’s a very pretty girl,’ said young Essex, who was at Greta’s side.

‘Far the prettiest girl in the parish, or for miles around.’

‘Speak for yourself, Greta,’ said a good-natured, blunt-featured young woman beside her, with a laugh. ‘I have always set up myself as a professional beauty, and I don’t give in to Joyce—except in so far, of course, as concerns Shakespeare and the musical glasses, where she is beyond all rivalry.’

Sir Harry, who was as little open to the pleasantry of Mid-Lothian as the Scotch in general are supposed to be to English wit, stared a little at the young person who assumed this position. He thought it possible she might be ‘chaffing,’ but was by no means sure. And he had no doubt that she was plain. He was too polite, however, to show his perplexity. ‘Does she receive any male pupils?’ he asked. ‘My tastes are quite undeveloped : even Shakespeare I don’t know so well as I ought. One has to get up a play or two now and then for an exam. ; and there’s “Hamlet,” etc., at the Lyceum of course.’

‘Joyce would never forgive you that

"Hamlet," etc.,' said the plain young lady. 'You need never hope after that to be pupil of hers.'

'Why, what should I say? Irving has done a lot of them. Shylock and—and Romeo, don't you know? You don't expect me to have all the names ready. A middle-aged fellow had no business to try Romeo. Come, I know as much as that.'

'They are all real people to Joyce,' said Greta. 'She is not like us, who only take up a book now and then. She lives among books: she thinks as much of Shakespeare as of Scotland. He is not only a poet, he is a—he is a—well, a kind of world,' she said, blushing a little. 'I don't know what other word to use.'

'You could not have used a better word,' said Norman Bellendean. 'I am not a very great reader, but I've found that up at a hill-station where one had neither books nor society. I think that was very well said.'

Norman looked with a friendly admiration at his little cousin, and she, with a half glance and blush of reply, looked at Mrs. Bellendean

at the head of the table, who, on her side, looked at them both. There was a great deal more in this mutual communication than met the eye.

‘Decidedly,’ said Sir Harry; ‘no one is good enough for this society unless he has undergone a preliminary training at the hands of Miss Joyce.’

‘Don’t you think,’ said a new voice hurriedly, with a ring of impatience in it, ‘that to bandy about a young lady’s name like this is not—not—quite good taste? Probably she would dislike being talked about—and certainly her friends——’

The young people turned in consternation to the quarter from which this utterance came. The Colonel’s wife had not hitherto attracted much attention. It had been settled that he was ‘an old darling:’ but Mrs. Hayward had not awakened the interest of these judges. They had decided that she was not good enough for him—that she had been the governess perhaps, or somebody who had nursed him through an illness, or otherwise been kind to him—and that it was by some of these unauthorised methods that she

had become Colonel Hayward's wife. Greta blushed crimson at this rebuke.

'Oh,' she said, 'no one meant anything that was not kind. I would not allow a word to be said. I—am very fond of her. She is my dear friend.'

'Perhaps it is not very good taste to discuss any one,' said the plain young lady. 'But Mrs. Hayward probably does not know who she is.'

'I know that she is your inferior,' said Mrs. Hayward quickly; 'but that should make you more particular, not less, to keep her name from being bandied about.'

'What is that my wife is saying?' said Colonel Hayward from the other end of the table. 'I can hear her voice. What are you saying, Elizabeth? She must be taking somebody's part.'

'It is nothing, Henry, nothing; I am taking nobody's part,' said Mrs. Hayward, becoming the colour of a peony. He had leaned forward to see her, for she sat on the same side of the table; and she leaned forward to reply to him, meeting the looks of half the table, amused at this conjugal demand.

and response. And then she shrank back, obliterating herself as well as she could, half angry, half ashamed, with a look of high temper and nervous annoyance which the young people set down to her disadvantage, whispering between themselves, 'Poor Colonel Hayward!' and what a pity it was he had not a nicer wife!

After this another wave of conversation passed over the company. A new subject, or rather half a dozen new subjects, drew the attention and interest of the young people away from this, of which the new and crowning interest was still unknown; and it was not till some time after, in the course of a lively debate upon the universally attractive theme of private theatricals, that the name which had caused that little controversy and stir of discussion was mentioned again.

Naturally, as it had been already subject to comment, there was at that moment a sudden pause all round the table, and the word came forth with all the more effect, softly spoken with a pause before and after—
'Joyce.'

'Upon my word,' said Mr. Bellendean

impatiently, 'I agree with Mrs. Hayward. The girl is not here, and she has done nothing to expose herself to perpetual comment. We hear a great deal too much of Joyce.'

And now it was that there occurred the extraordinary incident, remembered for years after, not only in Bellendean but elsewhere, which many people even unconnected with that part of the country must have heard of. There rose up suddenly by the side of Mrs. Bellendean, at the other end of the table, a tall figure, which stood swaying forward a little, hands resting on the table, looking down upon the astonished faces on either side. At sight of it Mrs. Hayward pushed back her chair impatiently, and bent her flushed face over her plate; while every one else looked up in expectation, some amused, all astonished, awaiting some little exhibition on the part of the guileless old soldier. Norman Bellendean turned his face towards his old Colonel with a smile, but yet a little regret. The *vieux moustache*, out of pure goodness of heart and simplicity of mind, was sometimes a little absurd. Probably he

was going once again to propose his young friend's health, to give testimony in his favour as a capital fellow. Norman held himself ready to spring up and cover the veteran's retreat, or to take upon himself the inevitable laugh. But he was no more prepared than the rest for what was coming. Colonel Hayward stood for a moment, his outline clear against the window behind him, his face indistinct against that light. He looked down the table, addressing himself to the host at the end, who half rose to listen, with a face of severe politeness, concealing much annoyance and despite. 'The old fool,' Mr. Bellendean was saying to himself.

'I want to say,' said the Colonel, swaying forward, as if he rested on those two hands with which he leant on the table, rather than on his feet, 'that a very great event has happened to me here. I came as a stranger, with no thought but to pass a few days, little thinking that I was to find what would affect all my future life. I owe it to the kindness of your house, Mr. Bellendean, and all I see about me, to tell you what has happened. Her name is on all your lips,' he said, looking

round him with the natural eloquence of an emotion which, now that the spectators were used to this strange occurrence, could be seen in the quiver of his lips and the moisture in his eyes. 'It is a name that has long been full of sweetness but also of pain to me. Now I hope it will be sweetness only. Joyce—my kind friends, that have been so good to her when I knew nothing—nothing! How can I thank you and this kind lady—this dear lady here! Joyce—belongs to me. Joyce—is Joyce Hayward. She is my daughter. She is my—my only child.'

Close upon this word sounded one subdued but most audible sob from the other end of the table. It was from Mrs. Hayward, who could contain herself no longer. That, at least, might have been spared her—that the girl was his only child. She pushed back her chair and rose up, making a hurried movement towards the door; but fortunately Mrs. Bellendean had divined and frustrated her, and in the universal stir of chairs and hum of wondering voices, Mrs. Hayward's action passed unnoticed, or almost unnoticed. And she escaped while the others all gathered

round the Colonel, all speaking together, congratulating, wondering. These were moments when he was very able to act for himself, and did not think at all what Elizabeth would say.

CHAPTER XII

AFTER Peter had got his dinner and had gone out again to his work, a silence fell upon the two who were left behind in the cottage. They had breathed no word, nor even exchanged a glance that could have awakened his suspicions—which was easy enough, for he had no suspicions. And they had avoided each other's eyes: they had talked of nothing that contained any reference to the subject of which their hearts were full. And when they were left alone, they still said nothing to each other. Janet would have no help from Joyce in the 'redding up.' 'Na, na,' she said; 'go away to your reading, or sew at some of your bonnie dies. This is nae wark for you.'

'Granny, I am going to help you as I have always done.'

‘This is nae wark for you : and I’ll no’ let you touch it,’ said the old woman, with a sudden stamp of her foot on the ground. ‘I’ll no’ let you touch it! do ye hear me, Joyce? As long as you are here, you sall just do what I say.’

The girl retreated, almost overawed by the passion in the old woman’s eyes; and then there was silence in the cottage, broken only by the sound of Janet’s movements, as she cleared away everything, and moved about with her quick short step from one place to another. Joyce sat down beside the writing-table, which was her own especial domain, and the quietness of impassioned suspense fell upon the little house. The scent of the mignonette still came in through the window from the little garden behind; but the door was shut, that no cheerful interruption, no passing neighbour with friendly salutations, pausing for a minute’s gossip, might disturb the breathless silence. They both expected—but knew not what: whether some fairy chariot to carry Joyce away, some long-lost relatives hurrying to take her to their arms, or some one merely coming to

reveal to them who she was,—to tell her that she belonged to some great house, and was the child of some injured princess. Strangely enough, neither of them suspected the real state of affairs. Janet divined that Mrs. Hayward had something to do with it, but Joyce had not even seen Mrs. Hayward; and the Colonel was to her an old friend who had known and probably loved her mother—but no more.

Thus they waited, not saying a word, devoured by a silent excitement, listening for some one coming, imagining steps that stopped at the door, and carriage-wheels that never came any nearer, but not communicating to each other what they thought. When Janet's clearing away was over, she still found things to do to keep her in movement. On ordinary occasions, when the work was done, she would sit down in the big chair by the window with the door open (it was natural that the door should be open at all seasons), and take up the big blue-worsted stocking which she was always knitting for Peter. And if Joyce was busy, Janet would nod to her friends as they

passed, and point with her thumb over her shoulder to show the need of quiet, which did not hinder a little subdued talk, all the more pleasant for being thus kept in check. 'She's aye busy,' the passers-by would say, with looks of admiring wonder. 'Oh ay, she's aye busy; there was never the like of her for learning. She's just never done,' the proud old woman would say, with a pretence at impatience. How proud she had been of all her nursling's wonderful ways! But now Janet could not sit down. She flung her stocking into a corner out of her way. She could not bear to see or speak to any one: the vicinity of other people was of itself an offence to her. If only she could quench with the sound of her steps those of the messenger of fate who was coming; if only she could keep him out for ever, and defend the treasure in her house behind that closed door!

The same suppressed fever of suspense was in Joyce's mind, but in a different sense. With her all was impatience and longing. When would they come? though she knew not whom or what she looked for. When

would this silence of fate be broken? The loud ticking of the clock filled the little house with a sound quite out of proportion to its importance, beating out the little lives of men with a methodical slow regularity, every minute taking so long; and the quick short steps of her old guardian never coming to an end, still bustling about when Joyce knew there was no longer anything to do, provoked her almost beyond bearing. So long as this went on, how could she hear *them* coming to the door?

They both started violently when at last there fell a sharp stroke, as of the end of a whip, on the closed door. It came as suddenly, and, to their exaggerated fancy, as solemnly, as the very stroke of fate: but it was only a footman from Bellendean, on horseback, with a note, which he almost flung at Janet as she opened the door, stopping Joyce, who sprang forward to do it. 'Na, you'll never open to a flunkey,' cried the old woman, with a sort of desperation in her tone, pushing back the girl, whose cheeks she could see were flaming and her eyes blazing. Janet would not give up the note

till she had hunted for her spectacles and put them on, and turned it over in her hand. 'Oh ay, it's to you after a', she said; 'I might have kent that,—and no a very ceevil direction. "Miss Joyce," nothing but Miss Joyce: and it's nae name when you come to think on't—no' like Marg'et or Mary. It's as if it was your last name.'

'Granny,' said Joyce, in great excitement, 'we are to go to the House immediately, to see Mrs. Bellendean.'

'We—are to gang? Gang then,' said Janet; 'naebody keeps ye. So far as I can judge, what with one call and another, you're there 'maist every day.'

'But never, never on such a day as this! And you are to come too. Granny, I'll get you your shawl and your bonnet.'

'Bide a moment. What for are ye in such a hurry? I'm no' at Mrs. Bellendean's beck and call, to go and come as she pleases. You can go yoursel', as you've done many a time before.'

'Granny,' cried Joyce, putting her arm, though the old woman resisted, round Janet's shoulders, 'you'll not refuse me? Think

what it may be,—to hear about my mother—and who I am—and whom I belong to.’

‘Ay,’ said Janet bitterly; ‘to hear when you’re to drive away in your grand carridge, and leave the house that’s aye been your shelter desolate; to fix the moment when them that have been father and mother to ye are to be but twa puir servant-bodies, and belang to ye nae mair!’

‘Granny!’ cried Joyce, in consternation, drawing Janet’s face towards her, stooping over the little resisting figure.

‘Dinna put your airms about me. Do you ken what I’ll be for you the morn?—your auld nurse—a puir auld body that will be nothing to you. Oh, and that’s maybe just what should be for a leddy like you. You were aye a leddy from the beginning, and I might have kent if my een hadna been blinded. I aye said to Peter, “Haud a loose grip,” but, eh! I never took it to mysel’.

‘Granny,’ cried Joyce, ‘do you think if the Queen herself were my mother,—if I were the Princess Royal, and everything at my beck and call,—do you think I could ever forsake *you*?’

‘Oh, how do I ken?’ cried Janet, still resisting the soft compulsion which was in Joyce’s arms; ‘and how can I tell what ye will be let do? You will no’ be your ain mistress as ye have been here. Ye will have to conform to other folks’ ways. Ye will have to do what’s becoming to your rank and your place in the world. If ye think that an auld wife in Bellendean village and an auld ploughman on the laird’s farm will be let come near ye——’

‘Granny, granny!’ cried Joyce, as Janet’s voice, overcome by her own argument, sank into an inarticulate murmur broken by sobs, —‘granny, granny! what have I done to make you think I have no heart?—and to give me up, and refuse to stand by me even before there’s a thing proved.’

‘Me!—refuse to stand by ye?’

‘That is just what you are doing—or at least it is what you are saying you will do; but as you never did an unkind thing in your life——’

‘Oh, many a one, many a one,’ cried the old woman. ‘I’ve just an unregenerate heart—but no’ to my ain.’

‘As you never did an unkind thing in your life,’ cried Joyce, out of breath, for she had hurried in the meantime to the aumry—the great oak cupboard which filled one side of the room—and made a rapid raid therein. ‘I have brought you your bonnet and your shawl.’

She proceeded to fold the big Paisley shawl as Janet wore it, with a large point descending to the hem of the old woman’s gown, and to put it round her shoulders. And then the large black satin bonnet, like the hood of a small carriage, was tied over Janet’s cap. It is true she wore only the cotton gown, her everyday garment, but the heavy folds of the shawl almost covered it, and Janet was thus equipped for any grandeur that might happen, and very well dressed in her own acceptation of the word. When these solemn garments were produced she struggled no more.

But though the ice was partially broken, there was very little said between them as they went up the avenue. Joyce’s heart went bounding before her, forestalling the disclosure, making a hundred mad sugges-

tions. She forgot all the circumstances,—where she was going, and even the unwilling companion by her side, who plodded along, scarcely able to keep up with her, her face altogether invisible within the shadow of the big bonnet, which stooped forward like the head of some curious uncouth flower. Poor old Janet! the girl's head was full of a romance more thrilling than any romance she had ever read; but Janet's was tragedy, far deeper, sounding every depth of despair, rising to every height of self-abnegation. And Peter! poor old Peter, who had no suspicion of anything, whom she had always adjured to keep a loose grip, and to whom 'the bit lassie' was as the light of his eyes. Not only her own desolation, but his also, Janet would have to bear. She had no heart to speak, but plodded along, scarcely even seeing Joyce by her side, ruminating heavily, turning over everything in her mind, with her eyes fixed upon the ground under the shadow of the black bonnet. 'Oh, haud a loose grip!' she had said it to Peter, but she had not laid her own advice to heart.

There were two or three servants in the

hall when Joyce went up the steps, leading, against her will, the old woman with her, who would fain have stolen round to the servants' entrance as 'mair becoming.' And the butler and the footman looked very important, and were strangely respectful, having heard Colonel Hayward's oration, or such echo of it as had been wafted to the servants' hall. 'This way, this way, Miss Joyce,' the butler said, with a little emphasis, though he had known her all his life, and seldom used such extreme civility of address. 'This way, Janet.' They were taken across the hall, where Janet, roused and wondering, saw visions of other people glancing eagerly at Joyce, and at her own little figure, stiff as if under mail in the panoply of that great shawl—to Mrs. Bellendean's room. There a little party of agitated people were gathered together. Mrs. Hayward seated very square, with her feet firm on the carpet : Mrs. Bellendean leaning over her writing-table, with a very nervous look : the Colonel standing against the big window, which exaggerated his outline, but made his features undiscernible. Janet made them a sort of curtsey as

she went in, but held her head high, rather defiant than humble. For why should she be humble, she who had all the right on her side, and who owed nobody anything? It was they who should be humble to her if they were going to take away her child. But she could not but say the gentleman was very civil. He put out a chair for her. As she said afterwards, not the little cane one that Mr. Brown, the butler, thought good enough, but a muckle soft easy-chair, a' springs and cushions, like the one his wife was sitting in. He didna seem to think that was ower good for the like of her. Joyce did not sit down at all. She stood with her hand upon Mrs. Bellendean's table, looking into the agitated face of the lady to whom she had always looked up as her best friend.

'You have got something to tell me?' said Joyce, her voice trembling a little. 'About my mother—about my—people?'

'Yes, Joyce.'

The girl said nothing more. She did not so much as look at Mrs. Hayward, who sat nervously still, not making a movement. Joyce supported herself upon the back of

the writing-table, which had a range of little drawers and pigeon-holes. She 'stood up, straight and tall, the flexible lines of her slim figure swaying a little, her hands clasped upon the upper ledge. Her hands were not, perhaps, very white in comparison with the hands of the young ladies who did nothing; but, coming out of her dark dress, which had no ornament of any kind, these hands clasped together looked like ivory or mother-of-pearl, and seemed to give out light. And then there was an interval of tremulous silence. Old Janet, watching them all with the keenest scrutiny, said to herself, 'Will nobody speak?'

'Joyce,' Mrs. Bellendean said at last, with a trembling voice, 'it will be a great, great change for you. You are a wise, good girl; you will not let it alter you to those who—deserve all your gratitude. My dear, it is a wonderful thing to think of. I can but think the hand of Heaven is in it.' Here the poor lady, who had been speaking in slow and laboured tones, struggling against her emotion, became almost inaudible, and stopped, while old Janet, wringing her hands, cried

out without knowing she did so, 'Oh, will naebody put us out o' our agony? Oh, will naebody tell us the truth?'

The Colonel made a step forward, then went back again. His child, his dead wife's child, filled him with awe. The thought of going up to her, taking her into his arms, which would have been the natural thing which he had meant to do, appalled him as he stood and looked at her, a young lady whom he did not know. What would she say or think? There had been nothing to lead up to it, as there was when he had met her in the morning, and when his heart had gone forth to her. Now anxiety and a sort of alarm mingled with his emotion. What would she think? his daughter—and yet a young lady whom he did not know? 'Elizabeth?' he said tremulously, but he could say no more.

'Young lady,' said another voice behind, with a touch of impatience in it,—'Joyce: it appears I must tell, though I have never seen you before.'

Joyce had all but turned her back upon this lady; who, she thought, could have

nothing to do with her. She turned round with a little start, and fixed her eyes upon the new speaker. It was curious that a stranger should tell her—one who had nothing to do with it. The little woman rose up, not a distinguished figure, looking commonplace to the girl's excited eyes, who felt almost impatient, annoyed by this interference. 'Joyce,' Mrs. Hayward repeated again, 'we don't even know each other, but we shall have a great deal to do with each other, and I hope—I hope we shall get on. Your poor mother—was Colonel Hayward's first wife before he married me. He is not to blame, for he never knew. Joyce: your name is Joyce Hayward. You are my husband's daughter. Your father stands there. I don't know why he doesn't come forward. He is the best man that ever was born. You will love him when you know him—— I don't know why he doesn't come forward,' cried his wife, in great agitation. She made herself a sudden stop, caught Joyce by the arm, and raising herself on tiptoe gave the girl a quick kiss on the cheek. 'I am your stepmother, and I hope—I hope that we will get on.'

Joyce stood like a figure turned to stone. She felt the world whirling round her as if she were coming down, down, some wonderful fall, too giddy and sickening to estimate. The colour and the eagerness went out of her face. She took no notice of Mrs. Hayward, whose interference at this strange moment she did not seem to understand, although she understood clearly all that she said. Her eyes were fixed, staring at the man there against the window, who was her father. Her father! Her heart had been very soft to him this morning, when she believed he was her mother's friend: but her father!—this was not how she had figured her father. He stood against the light, his outline all wavering and trembling, making a hesitating step towards her, then stopping again. Colonel Hayward was more agitated than words could say. Oh, if he had but taken her in his arms in the morning when his heart was full! He came forward slowly, faltering, not knowing what to say. When he had come close to her, he put out his hands. 'Joyce!' he said, 'you are your mother's living image: I saw it

from the first ; have you—have you nothing—to say to me ?’

‘ Sir,’ said Joyce, making no advance, ‘ my mother—must have had much to complain of—from you.’

His hands, which he had held out, with a quiver in them, fell to his sides. ‘ Much to complain of,’ he said, with a tremulous astonishment ; ‘ much—to complain of!’

A murmur of voices sounded in Joyce’s ears ; they sounded like the hum of the bees, or anything else inarticulate, with mingled tones of remonstrance, anger, entreaty : even old Janet’s quavering voice joined in. To hear the girl defying a gentleman, the Captain’s colonel, a grand soldier-officer, took away the old woman’s breath.

‘ You left her to die,’ cried Joyce, her soft voice fierce in excitement, ‘ all alone in a strange place. Why was she alone at such a time, when she had a husband to care for her ? You left her to die—and never asked after her for twenty years : never asked—till her child was a grown-up woman with other—other parents, and another home—of her own.’

‘Oh, dinna speak to the gentleman like that!’ cried old Janet, getting up with difficulty from her easy-chair. ‘Oh, Joyce, Joyce!’ cried Mrs. Bellendean. Mrs. Hayward said nothing, but she came up to the indignant young figure in the centre of this group, and laid an imperative hand upon her arm. Joyce shook it off. She did not know what she was doing. An immense disappointment, horror, anger with fate and all about her, surged up in her heart, and gave force to the passion of indignant feeling of which, amid all her thinkings on the subject she had never been conscious before. She turned away from the three women who surrounded her, each remonstrating in her way, and confronted once more the man—the father—whose great fault perhaps was that he was not the father whom the excited girl looked for, and that the disillusion was more than she could bear.

Colonel Hayward came to himself a little as he looked at her, and recovered some spirit. ‘I don’t blame you,’ he said, ‘for thinking so. No, Elizabeth, don’t blame her. I was in India. Short of deserting, I couldn’t get home.’

‘Why didn’t you desert, then,’ cried the girl in a flush of nervous passion, ‘rather than let her die?’ Then she turned round upon Janet, who stood behind, burdened with her great shawl, and threw herself upon the old woman’s shoulder. ‘Oh granny, granny, take me home, take me home again! for I have nothing to do here, nor among these strange folk,’ she cried.

CHAPTER XIII

THERE was no one who could detain her, for the agitated group in Mrs. Bellendean's room were too much taken by surprise, in this curious development of affairs, to do anything but gaze astonished at Joyce's unlooked-for passion. She went out of the room and out of the house, with old Janet, in her big shawl, following humbly, like a tall ship carrying out a humble little lugger in her train. Joyce seemed to have added to her stature in the intensity of her excitement. The nervous swiftness with which she moved, the air of passion in all her sails, to continue the metaphor, the unity of impassioned movement with which she swept forth—not looking back nor suffering any distracting influence to touch her—made the utmost impression upon the spectators who

had been, to their own thinking, themselves chief actors in the scene, until this young creature's surpassing emotion put them all into the position of audience while she herself filled the stage. Joyce would not see her father's face, though it appealed to her with a keen touch of unaccustomed feeling which was like a stab—nor would she suffer herself to look at Mrs. Bellendean, whose faintest indication of a wish had hitherto been almost law to the enthusiast. The girl was possessed by a tempest of personal excitement which carried her far beyond all the habitual restraints and inducements of her life. Nothing weighed with her, nothing moved her, but that overwhelming tide which carried her forth, wounded, humiliated, indignant, angry, she could not tell why, in the desperation of this most bitter and entirely reasonable disappointment which swept her soul. To think that it had come, the long-looked-for discovery—the revelation so often dreamt of—and that it should be this! Only a visionary, entirely abandoned to the devices of fancy by the bareness of all the facts that surrounded actual life in her ex-

perience, could have entertained such a vague grandeur of expectation, or could have fallen into such an abyss of disenchantment. It thrilled through and through her, giving a pride and loftiness indescribable to the carriage of her head, to the attitude of her person, to the swift and nervous splendour of her movements. Joyce, stung to the heart with her disappointment—with the *bourdonnement* in her ears and the jar in her nerves of a great downfall—was like a creature inspired. She swept out of the house, and crossed the open space of the drive, and disappeared in the shadows of the avenue, without a word, with scarcely a breath—carried along by that wind of passion, unconscious what she did.

Old Janet Matheson followed her child with feelings of almost equal intensity, but of a contradictoriness and mingled character which defies description. Her despair in the anticipation of losing Joyce was mingled with elation in the thought that Joyce was proved a lady beyond all possibility of doubt, fit to be received as an equal in the grand society at the House—which, however, in no way

modified her profound and passionate sense of loss and anger against the fate which she declared to herself bitterly she had always foreseen. That she should not have felt a momentary joy in her child's apparent rejection of the new life opening before her was impossible; but that too was mingled still more seriously by regret and alarm lest the girl should do anything to forfeit these advantages, and also by the dictates of honest judgment which showed her that resistance was impossible, and that it was foolish, and Joyce's revolt a mere blaze of temporary impulse which could not, and must not, stand against the necessities of life. All these mixed and contradictory sentiments were in Janet's mind as she hurried along, trying vainly to keep up with the swift, impassioned figure in front of her; trying, too, to reason with the unreasonable, and bring Joyce—strange travesty of all the usual circumstances of her life—to bring Joyce, the quick-witted, the all-understanding, to see what was right and wrong, what was practicable and impracticable. Her efforts in this respect were confined at present to a breathless interjection

now and then—‘ Oh, Joyce !’ ‘ Oh, my dear !’ ‘ Oh, my bonnie woman !’ in various tones of remonstrance and deprecation. But Joyce’s impulse of swift passion lasted long and carried her far, straight down the long avenue, and out into the village road beyond ; and her mind was so preoccupied that she did not take into consideration the fatigue and trouble of her companion, as, under any other circumstances, Joyce would have been sure to do. It was only when the sight of the village houses, and the contact once more with other human creatures, and the necessary reticences of life, suddenly checked Joyce in her career, that she slackened her pace, and, turning round to keep her face from the keen investigation of some neighbours grouped around a door, suddenly perceived a little behind her the flushed cheeks and labouring breath of Janet, who would not be separated from her side, and yet had found the effort of keeping up with her so difficult. Joyce turned back to her faithful old friend with a cry of self-reproach.

‘ Oh, granny ! and I’ve tired you struggling after me, and had not the sense to mind.’

‘Oh ay, you have the sense to mind. You have sense for most things in this world—but no’ the day, Joyce, no’ the day; you havena shown your sense the day.’

‘Granny,’ said Joyce, with trembling lips, ‘there has been nothing in my life till now that you have not had all authority in: but you must say nothing about this. I must be the judge in this. It is my business, and only mine.’

‘There is nothing,’ said Janet, ‘that can be your business and no’ mine: until the time comes when you yoursel’ are none of my business—when you’re in your father’s hands.’

‘Oh no, no,’ said Joyce under her breath, clasping her hands,—‘oh no, no, no!’

‘What are you murmurin’ and saying ower as if it was a charm? No, you havena shown your sense. You think the like of that can be at your pleasure to tak’ it or to leave it. Na, na, my bonnie woman. I’m the one that will have the most to bear. Ye needna answer me, though I can see the words in your mouth. I’m the one, whatever happens, that will have the maist to put up with. But I say, it’s no’ at your pleasure. What’s richt is richt, and

what's nature is nature, whatever ye may say. I tell ye, Joyce Matheson—but you're no' Joyce Matheson : eh ! to think me, that never used it, that I should gie ye that name noo ! Ye're Joyce Matheson nae mair.'

'Granny, granny, don't throw me off—don't cast me away, for I've nobody but you,' cried Joyce, with a voice full of tears.

'Me cast ye off ! but it's true ye've nae richt to the name, and Peter and me we've nae richt to you ; and the moment's come which I've aye foreseen : oh, I have foreseen it ! I never deceivit mysel' like him, or made up dreams and visions like you. And it's no' at your command to tak' it or to leave it—na, na. I'm no' one that can deceive mysel',' said Janet, mournfully shaking her head, and in the depth of her trouble finding a little sad satisfaction in her own clear-sightedness. 'The rest o' ye may think that heaven and earth will yield to ye, and that what ye want is the thing ye will get if ye stand to it ; but no' me—oh, no' me ! It's little comfort to the flesh to see sae clear, but I canna help it, for it's my nature. Na, na. We canna just go back to what we were

before, as if nothing had happened. It's no' permitted. Ye may do a heap o' things in this world, but ye canna go back. Na, na. Yesterday's no' dead, nor ye canna kill it, whatever ye may do. It's mair certain than the day or the morn, and it binds ye whether ye like it or no,—oh, it binds ye, it binds ye! We canna go back.'

These little sentences came from her at intervals, with breaks and pauses between, as they went along towards the cottage, sometimes interrupted by an exclamation from Joyce, sometimes by the greeting of a neighbour, sometimes by Janet's own breathlessness as she laboured along in the warm evening under the weight of her big shawl. Such monologues were not unusual to her, and Joyce had accompanied them by a commentary of half-regarded questions and exclamations, in all the mutual calm of family understanding on many a previous occasion. The girl had not lent a very steady ear to the grandmother's wisdom, nor had the grandmother paused to answer the girl's questions or remonstrances. Half heard, half noted, they had gone on serenely, the notes of age

and experience mingling with the dreams and impulses of youth. But that soft concert and harmony in which the two voices had differed without any jar, supplementing and completing each other, was not like this. The old woman was flushed and tearful, and Joyce was pale, with excited eyes that looked twice as large as usual, and a trembling in the lips which were so apt to move with impatient intelligence, answering before the question was made. It was apparent even to the neighbours that something must have happened, and still more apparent to Peter, who stood at the open door of the cottage looking out for them with a look which varied from the broad smile of pleasure with which he had perceived their two familiar figures approaching, to a troubled perception of something amiss which he could not fathom. Peter's mind was slow in operating; and as all previous information had been kept from him, he was without any clue to the origin of the trouble which he began to feel about him. To return and find the cottage closed, and neither wife nor child waiting for him, was in itself a prodigy; and though his astonishment had been partly

calmed by the explanation of the neighbours who gave him the key of the door, and informed him that Joyce and her granny had been sent for to 'the Hoose,' it was roused into a kind of dull anxiety by the agitated air which he slowly recognised as he watched them approaching, convinced, against his will, that something ailed them,—that some new event had happened. Nevertheless, Peter, in the voiceless delicacy of his peasant soul, assumed the smile, trembling on the edge of a laugh, which was his usual aspect when addressing his womenfolk.

'Weel,' he said, 'ye're bonnie hoose-keepers for a man to come hame to, wanting his tea! 'Deed, I might just whistle for my tea, and the twa of you stravaigin' naebody kens where. Joyce, my bonnie lass, ye should just think shame of yoursel', leading your auld granny into ill ways.' He ended with a long, low laugh, which was his expression of content and emotion and pleasure, and which turned the reproach into the tenderest family jest—and made way for them, but not till he had said out his say. 'Come awa', noo ye're here; come awa' ben,

and mask the tea : for I'm wanting something to sloken me,' he said.

'Oh, my poor man—oh, my poor auld man!' said Janet. She had not ceased to shake her head at intervals while he was speaking, and she uttered a suppressed groan as she went into the cottage. So long as all was uncertain, Janet had carefully kept every intimation of possible calamity from Peter; but now that the truth must be known, she had a kind of tragic pleasure in exciting his alarm.

'What ails the woman?' he said, 'girnin' and groanin' as if we were a' under sentence. What ails your granny, Joyce?'

'And so we are,' said Janet, 'a' under sentence, as ye say, and our days numbered, that we way apply our hearts unto wisdom. But, eh, that's no' what we do—far, far from it. And when misfortin comes, that comes to a', it's rare, rare that it doesn't come unexpected. We're eatin' and drinkin' and makin' merry—or else we're fechtin', beatin' our fellow-servants, and a' in a word that the Lord delayeth His comin'. And in a moment,' said the old woman, with a sob,

‘our house is left unto us desolate. That’s just the common way.’

‘What is she meaning with the house left desolate?’ said Peter, the smile slowly disappearing from his face. ‘The woman’s daft! Joyce, what is she meanin’? I’m no’ very gleg at the uptak,—no’ like you, my bonnie woman, that are just as keen as a needle. What’s she meanin’? Janet, woman, as lang as the lassie is weel and spared——’

‘The lassie, says he—naething but the lassie. And have I no’ foreseen it a’ the time? How often have I cried out to ye, Peter, to keep a loose grip! oh, to haud a loose grip! But ye never would listen to me. And now it’s just come to pass, and neither you nor me prepared.’

Peter’s face, gazing at her while she went on, was like a landscape in the uncertain shining of a Scotch summer. It lightened all over with a smile of good-humoured derision which brought out the shaggy eyebrows, the grizzled whiskers, the cavernous hollows round the eyes, like the inequalities of the mountainous land. And then the light fled instantaneously, and a pale blank of

shadow succeeded, leaving all that surface gray, while finer lines of anxiety and chill alarm developed about the large mouth and in the puckers of those many-folded eyelids, like movements of the wind among the herbage and trees. He stood and gazed at her with his eyes widely opened, his lips apart. But Janet did not meet that look. She went to the fire, which burned dully, 'gathered,' as she had left it in her careful way, to smoulder frugally in her absence, and poked it with violence, with sharp thrusts of the poker, standing with the back of her great shawl turned towards her companions, and her big bonnet still on her head. There was nothing said till with those sudden strokes and blows she had roused the dormant fire to flame, when she put on the kettle, and swept the hearth with vigorous, nervous movements, though always encumbered by the weight of the shawl. Then Janet made a sudden turn upon herself, and setting open the doors of the aumry, which made a sort of screen between her and the others, proceeded to take off and fold away that shawl of state. 'I'll maybe never put it on again,' she said to

herself, almost under her breath, 'for whatfor should I deck mysel' and fash my heid about my claes or what I put on? It was a' to be respectable for her: wha's heeding when there's nane but me?'

'There's something happened,' said Peter, in his low tremulous bass, like the rolling of distant thunder. 'Am I the maister of this hoose, and left to find oot by her parables and her metaphors, and no' a word of sense that a man can understand? What is't, woman? Speak plain out, or as sure's death I'll——' He clenched his large fist with a sudden silent rage, which could find no other expression than this seeming threat—though Peter would have died sooner than touch with a finger to harm her the old companion of his life.

'Grandfather,' said Joyce, 'I will tell you what has happened. Granny takes a thing into her head, and then you know, whatever we say, you or me, she never heeds, but follows her own fancy.' The girl spoke quickly, her words hurrying, her breath panting,—then came to a sudden pause, flushed crimson, her paleness changing to the red of

passionate feeling, and added, as slowly as she had been hurried before, 'Somebody has been here—that knows who my mother was : somebody that says—that says—he is my father. And she thinks I am to rise up and follow him,' cried Joyce, in another burst of sudden, swift, vehement words, — 'to rise up and follow him, like the woman in the Old Testament, away from my home and my own people, and all that I care for in the world! But I'll not do it—I'll not do it. I'll call no strange man my father. I'll bide in my own place where I've been all my days. What are their letters, and their old stories, and their secrets that they've found out, and their injuries that they're sorry for—sorry for after costing a woman's life! What's all that to me? I'll bide in my own place with them that have nourished me and cherished me, and made me happy all my days.'

'Eh, lassie! eh, lassie!' was all Peter could say. His large old limbs had got a trembling in them. He sat down in the big wooden arm-chair which stood against the wall, where it had been put away after dinner, and from that unaccustomed place, as if he

too had been put away out of the common strain of life, gazed at the two alternately,—at his wife still folding, folding that shawl that would not lie straight, and at Joyce, in her flush of impassioned determination, standing up drawn to her full height, her head thrown back, her slim young figure inspired by the rush and torrent of emotion which she herself scarcely understood in its vehemence and force. The little quiet, humble cottage was in a moment filled as with rushing wings and flashing weapons, the dust and jar of spiritual conflict: but not one of the three visible actors in this little tragic drama had for the moment a word to say. When this silence of fate was broken, it was by Janet, who had at last shut up her shawl in the aumry, and, coming and going from the fire to the table, filling the intense blank of that pause with a curious interlude of hasty sound and movement, said at last, almost fiercely, ‘Come to your tea. You’ll do little good standing glowering at ane anither. Sit down and tak your tea.’

CHAPTER XIV

THE first day of the holidays had also been a delight to Mr. Andrew Halliday's virtuous soul. More systematic in all he did than Joyce's irregular impulses permitted her to be, he had taken advantage of the leisure of the morning to enjoy to the utmost the quietness and freedom of a man who has no rule but his own pleasure for the government of his time. He got up a little later than usual, lingered over his breakfast, exhausted the newspaper over which, on ordinary occasions, he could cast only a hurried glance, and tasted the sweetness of that pause of occupation as no habitually unoccupied man could ever do. Then he sallied forth, not, as Joyce did, to dream and muse, but to enjoy the conscious pleasure of a walk, during which, indeed, he turned over many things in his mind which

were not unallied to happy dreams. For Andrew had come to a determination which filled him at once with sweet and tender fancies, and with the careful calculations of a prudent man in face of a great change in life. He made up his mind to insist upon a decision from Joyce, to have the time of their marriage settled. Of this she had never permitted him to speak. Their engagement had been altogether of a highly refined and visionary kind, a sort of bond of intellectual sympathy which pleased and flattered the consciousness of superiority in Halliday's mind, but in other respects was sometimes a little chilly, and so wanting in all warmer demonstration as to carry with it a perpetual subdued disappointment and tremor of uncertainty. Had not the schoolmaster possessed a great deal of self-approval and conscious worth, he might have sometimes lost confidence altogether in Joyce's affection; but though he was often uncomfortable with a sensation of having much kept from him which was his due, he had not as yet come so far as to be able to imagine that Joyce was indifferent to him. He could not have

done her that wrong. She had met nobody, could have met nobody, who was his equal, and how was it possible then that she could be unfaithful? It seemed to Halliday a wrong to Joyce to suppose her capable of such a lamentable want of judgment.

But he was heartily in love with her at the same time, as well as so much with himself, and the *régime* under which she held him was cold. He had become impatient of it, and very anxious to bring it to an end: and there was no reason, except her fantastic unreadiness, for delay. He said to himself that he must put a stop to it,—that he must step forward in all the decision of his manhood, and impress this determination upon the weaker feminine nature which was made to yield to his superior force and impulse. There was no reason in the world for delay. He had attained all the promotion which was likely for a long time to be his; and the position of schoolmistress in his parish was likely to be soon vacant, which would afford to Joyce the possibility of carrying on her professional work, and adding to their joint means, as no doubt she would insist upon

doing. This was not a thing which Halliday himself would have insisted upon. He felt profoundly that to be able to keep his wife at home, and retain her altogether like a garden enclosed for his private enjoyment, was a supreme luxury, and one which it was the privilege of the superior classes alone to prize at its proper value. He had been a prudent young man all his life, and had laid by a little money, and he felt with a proud and not ungenerous expansion of his bosom that he was able to afford himself that luxury ; but he doubted greatly whether it would be possible to bring Joyce to perceive that this was the more excellent way, and that it would be meet for her to give up her work and devote herself entirely to her husband. He comprehended something of her pride, her high independence, and even indulgently allowed for the presence in her of a great deal of that ambition which is more appropriate to a man than a woman ; therefore he was prepared to yield the question in respect to the work, and to find a new element of satisfaction in the thought of placing her by his own side in the little rostrum of the school

as well as in the seclusion of the home. The Board would be too glad to secure the services of Miss Matheson, so well known for her admirable management at Bellendean, as the mistress at Comely Green. And thus every exigency would be satisfied.

He went over his little house carefully, room by room, when he came in from his walk, and considered what it would be necessary to add, and what to repair and refresh, for Joyce's reception. His mind was a thoroughly frugal and prudent one, tempted by no vain desires, spoiled by no habits of extravagance. Amid all the fond visions which filled him, as he realised the new necessities of a double life, he yet calculated very closely what would be necessary, what they could do without, how many things were strictly needful, and how and at what price these additions could be procured. The calculations were full of enchantment, but they were not reckoned up less carefully. He returned to them after he had eaten his dinner, and they occupied the greater part of the afternoon, with many an excursion into the realms of fancy to sweeten them, although

of themselves they were sweet. And it was with the result of his calculations carefully jotted down upon a piece of paper in his pocket-book, that he set out before tea-time for Bellendean, to make known to Joyce his desires and determination, and to sway her mind as the female mind ought to be swayed, half by sweet persuasion, half by the magnetism of his superior force of impulse, to adopt it as her own. The idea that she might insist, and decline to be influenced, was one which he would not allow himself to take into consideration, though it lay in the background in one of the chambers of his mind with a sort of chill sense of unpleasant possibility, which, so far as possible, he put out of sight.

It was a lovely afternoon, and the road from Comely Green to Bellendean lay partly by the highroad within sight of the Firth, and partly through the woods and park of Bellendean House. Everything was cheerful round him, the birds singing, the water reflecting the sunshine in jewelled lines of sparkle and light. Andrew could not think of any such black thing as refusal, or even

reluctance, amid all the sweet harmony and consent to be happy, which was in the lovely summer day.

When he reached the cottage it gave him a little thrill of surprise to find the door shut which usually stood so frankly open, admitting the genial summer atmosphere and something of the sights and sounds outside. It was strange to find the door closed on a summer evening; and an idea that somebody must be ill, or that something must have happened, sprang into instant life in Andrew's mind. His knock was not even answered by the invitation to come in, which would have been natural in other circumstances. He heard a little movement inside, but no cheerful sound of voices, and presently the door was opened by Janet, who, looking out upon him with a jealous glance through a very small opening, breathed forth an 'Oh! it's you, Andrew;' and, letting the door swing fully open, bade him come in. Within he was bewildered to see old Peter and Joyce seated at the table upon which the tea-things still stood. There they were all three, nobody ill, no visible cause for this

extraordinary seclusion. Peter gave him a grim little nod without speaking, and Joyce put forth—it almost seemed unwillingly—her hand, but without moving otherwise. He took the chair from which Janet had risen, and gazed at them bewildered. ‘What is the matter? Has anything happened?’ he said.

There was a pause. Peter drummed upon the table with his fingers, with something almost derisive in the measured sound; and Joyce half turned to him as if about to speak, but said nothing. It was Janet who answered his question. There was a hot flush upon her cheeks—the flush of excitement and emotion. She answered him shaking her head.

‘Ay, Andrew, there’s something happened. We’re no’ like oursels, as ye can see. Ye wouldna have gotten in this nicht to this afflicted house if ye had not been airt and pairt in it as weel as Peter and me.’

‘What is the matter?’ he repeated, with increased alarm.

‘Ye better tell him, Joyce. Puir lad, he has a richt to hear. He’s maybe thought like me of sic a thing happening, without fear, as

if it might be a kind of diversion. The Lord help us short-sighted folk.'

'What is it?' he said; 'you are driving me distracted. What has happened?'

Upon this Peter gave a short, dry laugh, which it was alarming to hear. 'He'll never find out,' said the old man, 'if ye give him years to do it. It's against reason—it's against sense—a man to step in and take another man's bairn away.'

Joyce was very pale. He observed this for the first time in the confusion and the trouble of this incomprehensible scene. She sat with her hands clasped, looking at no one—not even at himself, though she had given him her hand. It was rare, indeed, that Joyce should be the last to explain. Halliday drew his chair a little nearer, and put his hand timidly upon hers, which made her start. She made a quick movement, as if to draw it away, then visibly controlled herself and permitted that mute interrogation and caress.

'It is just what I aye kent would happen,' said Janet, unconscious or indifferent to her self-contradictions; 'and many a time have I implored my man no' to build upon her, though

I wasna so wise as to tak my ain advice. And as for you, Andrew, though I took good care you should hear a' the circumstances, maybe I should have warned you mair clearly that you should not lippen to her, and ware a' your heart upon her, when at ainy moment—at ainy moment——' Here the old woman's voice failed her, and broke off in a momentary, much-resisted sob. Halliday's astonishment and anxiety grew at every word. His hand pressed Joyce's hand with the increasing fervour of an eager demand.

'Joyce! Joyce! what do they mean? Have you nothing to say?'

Joyce turned upon him, with a sudden flush taking the place of her paleness. 'Granny would make you think that I was not worthy to be trusted,' she said; 'that to ware your heart upon me, as she says, was to be cheated and betrayed.'

'No, no,—*I* never could believe that!' he cried, not unwilling to prove the superiority of his own trust to that of the old people, who, Halliday felt, it would not be a bad thing to be clear of, or as nearly clear of as circumstances might permit.

Joyce scarcely paused to hear his response, but, having found her voice, went on hurriedly. 'People have come that say—that say—— They are just strangers—we never saw them before. They say that I—I—belong to them. Oh, I am not going to pretend,' cried Joyce, 'that I have not thought of that happening, many a day! It was like a poem all to myself. It went round and round in my head. It was a kind of dream. But I never thought—I never, never thought what would become of me if it came true. And how do I know that it is true? Grandfather, you and granny are my father and my mother. I never knew any other. You have brought me up and cared for me, and I am your child to the end of my life. I will never, never——'

'Hold your peace!' cried Janet. She put up her hard hand against Joyce's soft young mouth. The little old woman grew majestic in her sense of justice and right. 'Hold your peace!' she cried. 'Make no vows, lest you should be tempted to break them and sin against the Lord. Ye'll do what it's your duty to do. You'll no' tell me this and that

—that you'll take the law in your ain hands. Haud your tongue, Peter Matheson! You're an auld fool, putting nonsense into the bairn's head. What!' cried Janet, 'a bairn of MINE to say that she'll act as she likes and please hersel', and take her choice what she'll do! and a' the time her duty straight forenenst her, and nae mainner o' doubt what it is. Dinna speak such stuff to me.'

In the pause of this conflict Andrew Halliday's voice came in, astonished yet composed, with curiosity in it and strong expectation—sentiments entirely different from those which swayed the others, and which silenced them and aroused their attention from the very force of contrast. 'People who say—that you belong to them? Your own people—your own friends—Joyce! Tell me who they are,—tell me—— You take away my breath. To think that they should have found her after all!'

They all paused in the impassioned strain of their thoughts to look at him. This new note struck in the midst of them was startling and incomprehensible, yet checked the excitement and vehemence of their own feelings.

‘Ah, Andro,’ said old Peter, ‘ye’re a wise man. Ye would like to hear a’ about it, and wha they are, and if the new freends—the new freends’—the old man coughed over the words to get his voice—‘if they’re maybe grander folk and mair to your credit’—he broke off into his usual laugh, but a laugh harsh and broken. ‘Ye’re a wise lad, Andro, my man—ye’re a wise lad.’

‘It is very natural, I think,’ said Andrew, reddening, ‘that I should wish to know. We have spoken many a time of Joyce’s—friends. I wish to know about them, and what they are, naturally, as any one in my position would do.’

‘Joyce’s freends!—I thocht I kent weel what that meant,’ said Janet. ‘Eh! to hear him speak of Joyce’s freends. I thocht I kent weel what that meant,’ she repeated, with a smile of bitterness. Halliday had taken her seat at the table, and she went and seated herself at the wall at as great a distance from the group as the limits of space would permit. The old woman’s eyes were keen with grief, and bitter pain, and that sense of being superseded which is so hard to bear. She thought

that Joyce had put her chair a little closer to that of the schoolmaster, detaching herself from Peter, and that the young people already formed a little party by themselves. This was the form her jealous consciousness of Joyce's superiority had always taken, even when everything went well. She burst forth again in indignant prophetic strains, taking a little comfort in this thought.

'But dinna you think you'll get her,' she cried, 'no more than Peter or me!'—dinna you believe that they'll think you good enough for her, Andrew Halliday. If it's ended for us, it's mair than ended for you. Do you think a grand sodger-officer, that was the Captain's commander, and high, high up, nigh to the Queen herself,—do you think a man like that will give his dauchter—and such a dauchter, fit for the Queen's Court if ever lady was—to a bit poor little parish schoolmaister like you?'

The comfort which Janet took from this prognostication was bitter, but it was great. A curious pride in the grandeur of the officer who was 'the Captain's' commander made her bosom swell. At least there was satis-

faction in that, and in the sudden downfall, the unmitigated and prompt destruction, of all hopes that might be entertained by that whippersnapper, who dared to demand explanations on the subject of Joyce's 'friends'—friends in Scotch peasant parlance meaning what 'parents' means in French, the family and nearest relatives. Janet had rightly divined that Halliday received the news not with sympathetic pain or alarm, but with suppressed delight, looking forward to the acquisition to himself, through his promised wife, of 'friends' who would at once elevate him to the rank of gentleman, after which he longed with a consciousness of having no internal right to it, which old Janet's keen instincts had always comprehended—far, far different from Joyce, who wanted no elevation,—who was a lady born.

'Granny,' said Joyce, with a trembling voice, 'you think very little, very, very little—I see it now for the first time—of me.'

'Me think little of ye! that's a bonnie story; but weel, weel I ken what will happen. We will pairt with sore hearts, but a firm meaning to be just the same to ane anither.

I've seen a heap of things in my lifetime,' said Janet, with mournful pride. 'Sae has my man; but they havena time to think—they're no' aye turning things ower and ower like a woman at the fireside. I've seen mony changes and pairtings, and how it was aye said it should make no difference. Eh! I've seen that in the maist natural way. It's no' that you'll mean ony unfaithfulness, my bonnie woman. Na, na. I ken ye to the bottom o' your heart, and there's nae unfaithfulness in you—no' even to him,' said Janet, indicating Halliday half contemptuously by a pointing finger, 'much less to your grandfather and me. I'm whiles in an ill key, and I've been sae, I dinna deny it, since ever I heard this awfu' news: but now I'm coming to mysel'. Ye'll do your duty, Joyce. Ye'll accept what canna be refused, and ye'll gang away from us with a sair heart, and it will be a' settled that you're to come back, maybe twice a-year, maybe ance a-year, to Peter and me, and be our ain bairn again. They're no' ill folk,' she went on, the tears dropping upon her apron on which she was folding hem after hem—'they're good folk; they're kind, awfu'

kind—they'll never wish ye to be ungrateful, —that's what they'll say. They'll no' oppose it, they'll settle it a'—maybe a week, maybe a month, maybe mair; they'll be real weel-meaning, real kind. And Peter and me, we'll live a' the year thinking o' that time; and ye'll come back, my bonnie dear—oh, ye'll come back! with your heart licht to think of the pleasure of the auld folk. But, eh Joyce! ye'll no' be in the house a moment till ye'll see the difference; ye'll no' have graspit my hand or looked me in the face till ye see the difference. Ye'll see the glaur on your grandfaither's shoon when he comes in, and the sweat on his brow. No' with ony unkind meaning. Oh, far frae that—far frae that! Do I no' ken your heart? But ye'll be used to other things—it'll a' have turned strange to ye then—and ye'll see where we're wanting. Oh, ye'll see it! It will just be mair plain to ye than all the rest. The wee bit place, the common things, the neebors a' keen to ken, but chief of us, Peter and me our ainsels, twa common puir folk.'

'Granny!' cried Joyce, flinging herself

upon her, unable to bear this gradual working up.

Peter came in with a chorus with his big broken laugh—‘Ay, ay, just that, just that! an auld broken-down ploughman and his puir auld body of a wife. It’s just that, it’s just that!’

CHAPTER XV

GREAT was the consternation in Bellendean over the unsatisfactory interview which it was so soon known had taken place between Joyce and her father. Colonel Hayward's public intimation of the facts at luncheon had created, as might have been expected, the greatest commotion; and the ladies of the party assembled round Mrs. Bellendean with warm curiosity when the whisper ran through the house that Joyce had come—and had gone away again. Gone away! To explain it was very difficult, to understand it impossible. The schoolmistress, the village girl, to discover that she was Colonel Hayward's daughter, and not to be elated, transported by the discovery! Why, it was a romance, it was like a fairy tale. Mrs. Bellendean's suggestion that there was a second side to

everything, though the fact was not generally recognised in fairy tales, contented no one; and a little mob of excited critics, all touched and interested by Colonel Hayward's speech, turned upon the rustic heroine and denounced her pretensions. What did she expect, what had she looked for — to turn out a king's daughter, or a duke's? But it was generally agreed that few dukes were so delightful as Colonel Hayward, and that Joyce showed the worst of taste as well as the utmost ingratitude. Mrs. Bellendean was disappointed too; but she was partly comforted by the fact that Captain Bellendean, who was much bewildered by the girl's caprice and folly, had fallen into a long and apparently interesting argument on the subject with Greta, her own special favourite and *protégée*. It is almost impossible for any natural woman to find a man in Norman's position, well-looking, young, and rich, within her range, without forming matrimonial schemes for him of one kind or another; and Mrs. Bellendean had already made up her mind that the pang of leaving Bellendean would be much softened could she see her successor

in Greta, the favourite of the house, a girl full of her own partialities and ways of thinking, and whom she had influenced all her life. She forgot Joyce in seeing the animated discussion that rose between these two. It was disappointing, however, that when in the very midst of this discussion Captain Bellen-dean saw from the window at which he was standing his old Colonel walking to and fro on the terrace with heavy steps and bowed head, his point of interest changed at once. He looked no more at Greta, though she was a much prettier sight: evidently all his sympathy was for Colonel Hayward; and after the talk had gone on languishing for a few moments, he excused himself for leaving her. 'Poor old chap! I must go and try if I can do anything to console him,' he said.

Norman found Colonel Hayward very much cast down and melancholy. He was pacing up and down, up and down—sometimes pausing to throw a blank look over the landscape, sometimes mechanically gathering a faded leaf from one of the creepers on the wall. He endeavoured to pull himself

up when Captain Bellendean joined him ; but the old soldier had no skill in concealing his feelings, and he was too anxious to get support and sympathy to remain long silent. He announced, with all the solemnity becoming a strange event, that Mrs. Hayward was lying down a little. 'She travelled all night, you know ; and though she can sleep on the railway, it never does one much good that sort of sleep ; and there has been a great deal going on all day—a great deal that has been very agitating for us both. I persuaded her to lie down,' Colonel Hayward said, looking at his companion furtively, as if afraid that Norman might think Elizabeth was to blame.

'It was the best thing she could do,' said Captain Bellendean.

'That is exactly what I told her—the very best thing she could do. It is seldom she leaves me when I have so much need of her ; but I insisted upon it. And then I am in full possession of her sentiments,' said the Colonel. 'She told me exactly what she thought ; and she advised me to take a walk by myself, and think it all out.'

‘Perhaps, then, I ought to leave you alone, Colonel? but I saw you from the window, and thought you looked out of spirits.’

‘My dear boy, I am glad—too glad—to have you. Thinking a thing out is easy to say, but not so easy to do. And you had always a great deal of sense, Bellendean. When we had difficulties in the regiment, I well remember—— But that was easy in comparison with this. You know what has happened. We’ve found my daughter. For I was married long before I met with my wife. It was only for a little time; and then she disappeared, poor girl, and I never could find out what became of her. It gave me a very great deal of trouble and distress—more than I could tell you; and now we have found out that she left a child. I told you all to-day at luncheon. Joyce, the girl they all talk about, is my daughter, Can you believe such a story?’

‘I had heard about it before; and then what you said to-day—it is very wonderful.’

‘Yes; but it’s quite true. And we told her—in Mrs. Bellendean’s room. And if

you will believe it, she—— She as good as rejected me, Norman—refused to have me for her father. It has thrown me into a dreadful state of confusion. And Elizabeth can't help me, it appears. She says I must work it out for myself. But it seems unnatural to work out a thing by myself; and especially a thing like this. Yes, the girl would have nothing to say to me, Bellendean. She says I must have ill-treated her mother—poor Joyce! the girl I told you that I had married. And I never did—indeed I never did!’

‘I am sure of that, sir. You never injured any one.’

‘Ah, my dear fellow! you don't know how things happen. It seems to be nobody's fault, and yet there's injury done. It's very bewildering to me, at my age, to think of having a child living. I never—thought of anything of the kind. I may have wished that my wife—and then again it would seem almost better that it shouldn't be so.’

Colonel Hayward put his arm within that of Norman; he quickened his pace as they went up and down the terrace, and then

would stop suddenly to deliver an emphatic sentence. 'She looked me in the face, as if she defied me,' he said, 'and then went away and left me—with that old woman. Did you ever hear of such a position, Bellendean? My daughter, you know, my own daughter—and she looks me in the face, and tells me I must have harmed her mother, and why did I leave her? and goes away! What am I to do? When you have made such a discovery, there it is; you can't put it out of your mind, or go upon your way, as if you had never found it out. I can't be as I was before. I have got a daughter. You may smile, Bellendean, and think it's just the old fellow's confused way.'

'I don't, indeed, sir. I can quite understand the embarrassment——'

'That's it—the embarrassment. She belongs to me, and her future should be my dearest care—my dearest care—a daughter, you know, more even than a boy. Just what I have often thought would make life perfect—just a sort of a glory to us, Elizabeth and me; but when you think of it, quite a stranger, brought up so different! And

Elizabeth opposed, a little opposed. I can't help seeing it, though she tries to hide it, telling me that it's my affair—that I must think it out myself. How can I think it out myself? and then my daughter herself turning upon me! What can I do? I don't know what to do!

'Everybody,' said Captain Bellendean—though a little against the grain, for he was himself very indignant with Joyce—'speaks highly of her; there is but one voice—every one likes and admires her.'

The Colonel gave a little pressure to the young man's arm, as if in thanks, and said with a sigh, 'She is very like her mother. You would say, if you had known her, the very same—more than a likeness. Elizabeth has had a good deal to put up with on that account. You can't wonder if she is a little—opposed. And everything is at a stand-still. I have to take the next step; they will neither of them help me—and what am I to do? Children—seem to bring love with them when they are born in a house. But when a grown-up young woman appears that you never saw before, and you are told she

is your daughter! It is a dreadful position to be in, Bellendean. I don't know, no more than a baby, what to do.'

'That is rather an alarming view to take,' said Norman. 'But when you know her better, most likely everything will come right. You have a very kind heart, sir, and the young lady is very pretty, and nice, and clever, and nature will speak.'

The Colonel shook his head. 'I believed this morning in nature speaking—but I am sadly shaken, sadly shaken, Bellendean. Why did she turn against me? You would have thought that merely to say, I am your father—but she turned upon me as if I had been her enemy. And what can I do? We can't go away to-morrow and leave her here. We must have her to live with us, and perhaps she won't come, and most likely she'll not like it if she does. I am dreadfully down about it all. Joyce's girl whom I don't know, and Elizabeth, who gives me up and goes to lie down because she's tired—just when I need her most!'

'But, Colonel, it is true that Mrs. Hayward must be very tired: and no doubt she

feels that you and Miss Joyce will understand each other better if you meet by yourselves, when she is not there.'

'Eh? Do you think that's what she means, Bellendean? and do you think so too? But even then I am no further advanced than I was before; for my daughter, you know, she's not here, and how do I know where to find her, even if I were prepared to meet her? and heaven knows I am less prepared than ever — and very nervous and anxious; and if she were standing before me at this moment I don't know what I should say.'

'I can show you where to find her,' said Captain Bellendean. 'Come and see her, sir; you don't want to be prepared — you have only to show her that she may trust to your kind heart, and settle everything before Mrs. Hayward wakes up.'

'My kind heart!' said Colonel Hayward. 'I'm not so sure that my heart is kind — not, it appears, to my own flesh and blood. I feel almost as if I should be glad never to hear of her again.'

'That is only because you are out of sorts, and got no sleep last night.'

‘How do you know I got no sleep? It’s quite true. Elizabeth thinks I only fancy it, but the truth is that when my mind is disturbed I cannot sleep. I am dreadfully down about it all, Bellendean. No, I haven’t the courage, I haven’t the courage. If she were to tell me again that her mother had much to complain of, I couldn’t answer a word. And yet it’s not so. I declare to you, Bellendean, upon my honour, it was no fault of mine.’

‘I am sure of it, sir,’ said Bellendean. ‘Don’t think any more of that, but come with me and see Miss Joyce, and settle it all.’

The Colonel said little as he walked down to the village leaning on young Bellendean’s arm. He was alarmed and nervous; his throat was dry, his mind was confused. Norman’s society, the touch of his arm, the moral force of his companionship, kept Colonel Hayward up to the mark, or it is possible that he might have turned back and fled from those difficulties which he did not feel himself able to cope with, and the new relationship that had already produced such confusion in his life. But he was firmly

held by Norman's arm, and did not resist the impulse, though it was not his own. He did not know what he was going to say to Joyce, or how to meet this proud young creature, filled with a fanciful indignation for her mother's wrongs. He had never wronged her mother. Pitiful as the story was, and tenderly as he had always regarded her memory, the Joyce of his youth had been the instrument of her own misery and of much trouble and anguish to him, though the gentle-hearted soldier had accepted it always as a sort of natural calamity for which nobody was responsible, and never blamed her. But even the gentlest-hearted will be moved when the judgment which they have refrained from making is turned against themselves. It was not his fault, and yet how could he say so? How could he explain it to this second hot-headed Joyce without blaming the first who had so suffered, and over whom death had laid a shadowy veil of tenderness, an oblivion of all mistakes and errors? Colonel Hayward did not articulately discuss this question with himself, but it was at the bottom of all the confusion in

his troubled mind. He was afraid of her, shy of her presence, not knowing how to address or approach this stranger, who was his own child. He had looked with a tender envy at other people's daughters before now, thinking if only Elizabeth—— But a daughter who was not Elizabeth's, and to whom his wife was even, as he said to himself, a little,—opposed, was something that had never entered into his thoughts. How easy it was in the story-books!—how parents and children long separated sprang into each other's arms and hearts by instinct. But it was very different in real life, when the problem how to receive into the intimacy of so small a household a third person who was so near in blood, so absolutely unknown in all that constitutes human sympathy, had to be solved at a moment's notice! He had been very much excited and disturbed the day before, but he had not doubted the power of Elizabeth to put everything right. Now, however, Elizabeth had not only for the first time failed, but was—opposed. She had not said it, but he had felt it. She had declared herself tired, and lain down, and told him to

work it out himself. Such a state of affairs was one which Colonel Hayward had never contemplated, and everything accordingly was much worse than yesterday, when he had still been able to feel that if Elizabeth were only here all would go well.

The party in the cottage were in a very subdued and depressed condition when Captain Bellendean knocked at the door. The heat of resistance in Joyce's mind had died down. Whether it was the strain of argument which Janet still carried on, though Joyce had not consciously listened to it, or whether the mere effect of the short lapse of time which quenches excitement had operated unawares upon her mind, it is certain that her vehemence of feeling and rebellion of heart had sunk into that despondent suspension of thought which exhaustion brings. Resistance dies out, and the chill compulsion of circumstance comes in, making itself felt above all flashes of indignation, all revolts of sentiment. Joyce knew now, though she had not acknowledged it in words, that her power over her own life was gone,—that there was no strength in her to resist the

new laws and subordination under which she felt herself to have fallen. She had not even the consciousness which a girl in a higher class might have been supported by, that her father's rights over her were not supreme. She believed that she had no power to resist his decrees as to what was to become of her ; and accordingly, after the first outburst of contradictory feeling, the girl's heart and courage had altogether succumbed. She had fallen upon the neck of her old guardian—the true mother of her life—with tears, which quenched out every spark of the passion which had inspired her.

Joyce felt herself to be within the grasp of fate. She was like one of the heroines of the poets in a different aspect from that in which she had identified herself with Rosalind or Miranda. What she was like now was Iphigenia or Antigone caught in the remorseless bonds of destiny. She did not even feel that forlorn satisfaction in it which she might have done had there been more time, or had she been less unhappy. The only feeling she was conscious of was misery, life running low in her,

all the elements and powers against her, and the possibility even of resistance gone out of her. Old Janet had pressed her close, and then had repulsed her with the impatience of highly excited feeling ; and Joyce stood before the window, with the light upon her pale face, quite subdued, unresistant, dejected to the bottom of her heart. The only one of the group who showed any energy or satisfaction was Andrew Halliday, who could not refrain a rising and exhilaration of heart at the thought of being son-in-law to a man who was the 'Captain's' commanding officer, and consequently occupied a position among the great ones of the earth. Andrew's imagination had already leaped at all the good things that might follow for himself. He thought of possible elevations in the way of head-masterships, scholastic dignities, and honours. 'They' would never leave Joyce's husband a parish schoolmaster ! He had not time to follow it out, but his thoughts had swayed swiftly upwards to promotions and honours undefined.

'Wha's that at the door?' said Janet, among her tears.

‘It’s the Captain,’ said Joyce, in a voice so low that she was almost inaudible. Then she added, ‘it’s—it’s—my father.’

‘Her father!’ Peter rose up with a lowering brow. ‘My hoose is no’ a place for every fremd person to come oot and in at their pleasure. Let them be. I forbid ainy person to open that door.’

‘Oh, haud you tongue, man!’ cried Janet; ‘can ye keep them oot with a steekit door—them that has the law on their side, and nature too?’

The old man took his blue bonnet, which hung on the back of his chair. ‘Stand back, sir,’ he said sternly to Andrew, who had risen to go to the door; ‘if my hoose is mine nae mair, nor my bairn mine nae mair, it’s me, at least, that has the richt to open, and nae ither man.’ He put his bonnet on his head, pulling it down upon his brows. ‘My heed’s white and my heart’s sair: if the laird thinks I’ve nae mainners, he maun just put up wi’t. I’m no’ lang for this life that I should care.’ He threw the door wide open as he spoke, meeting the look of the newcomers with his head down, and his shaggy eyebrows half

covering his eyes. 'Gang in, gang in, if ye've business,' he said, and flung heavily past them, without further greeting. The sound of his heavy footstep, hastening away, filled all the silence which, for a moment, no one broke.

Norman made way, and almost pushed the Colonel in before him. 'They expect you,' he said. And Colonel Hayward stepped in. A more embarrassed man, or one more incapable of filling so difficult a position, could not be. How willingly would he have followed Peter! But duty and necessity and Norman Bellendean all kept him up to the mark. Joyce stood straight up before him in front of the window. She turned to him her pale face, her eyes heavy with tears. The good man was accustomed to be received with pleasure, to dispense kindness wherever he went: to appear thus, in the aspect of a destroyer of domestic happiness, was more painful and confusing than words can say.

'Young lady,' he began, and stopped, growing more confused than ever. Then, desperation giving him courage, 'Joyce—— It cannot be stranger to you than it is to

me, to see you standing here before me, my daughter, when I never knew I had a daughter. My dear, we ought to love one another,—but how can we, being such strangers? I have never been used to—anything of the kind. It's a great shock to us both, finding this out. But if you'll trust yourself to me, I'll—I'll do my best. A man cannot say more.'

'Sir,' said Joyce; her voice faltered and died away in her throat. She made an effort and began again, 'Sir,' then broke down altogether, and, making a step backwards, clutched at old Janet's dress. 'Oh, granny, he's very kind—his face is very kind,' she cried.

'Ay,' said the old woman, 'ye say true; he has a real kind face. Sir, what she wants to tell ye is, that though a's strange, and it's hard, hard to ken what to say, she'll be a good daughter to ye, and do her duty, though maybe there's mony things that may gang wrang at first. Ye see she's had naebody but Peter and me: and she's real fond of the twa auld folk, and has been the best bairn'—Janet's voice shook a little, but she controlled it. 'Never, never in this world was there a

better bairn—though she's aye had the nature o' a lady and the manners o' ane, and might have thought shame of us puir country bodies. Na, my bonnie woman, na,—I ken ye never did. But, sir, ye need never fear to haud up your head when ye've HER by your side. She's fit to stand before kings—ay, that she is,—before kings, and no' before meaner men.'

The Colonel gazed curiously at the little old woman, who stood so firm in her self-abnegation that he, at least, never realised how sadly it went against the grain. 'Madam,' he said, in his old-fashioned way, 'I believe you fully; but it must be all to your credit and the way you have brought her up, that I find her what she is.' He took Janet's hand and held it in his own,—a hard little hand, scored and bony with work, worn with age—not lovely in any way. The Colonel recovered himself and regained his composure, now that he had come to the point at which he could pay compliments and give pleasure. 'I thank you, madam, from the bottom of my heart, for what you have done for her, and for what you are giving up to me,' he said,

bowing low. Janet had no understanding of what he meant ; and when he bent his grizzled moustache to kiss her hand, she gave a little shriek of mingled consternation and pleasure. ' Eh, Colonel ! ' she exclaimed, her old cheeks tingling with a blush that would not have shamed a girl's. Never in her life had lips of man touched Janet's hand before. She drew it from him and fell back upon her chair and sobbed, looking at the knotted fingers and prominent veins in an ecstasy of wonder and admiration. ' Did you see that Joyce ? he's kissed my hand ; did ever mortal see the like ? Eh, Colonel ! I just havena a word—no' a word—to say.'

Joyce put out both her hands to her father, her eyes swimming in tears, her face lighted up with that sudden gleam of instantaneous perception which was one of the charms of her face. ' Oh, sir ! ' she said : the other word, father, fluttered on her lips. It was a gentleman who did that, one of the species which Joyce knew so little, but only that she belonged to it. In her quick imagination rehearsing every incident before it happened, that was what she would have had him do.

The little act of personal homage was more than words, more than deeds, and changed the current of her feelings as by magic. And the Colonel now was in his element too. The tender flattery and sincere extravagance of all those delicate ways of giving pleasure were easy and natural to him, and he was restored to himself. He took Joyce's hands in one of his, and drew her within his arm.

'My dear,' he said, with moisture in his eyes, 'you are very like your mother. God forgive me if I ever frightened her or neglected her! I could not look you in the face if I had ever done her conscious wrong. Will you kiss me, my child, and forgive your father? She would bid you do so if she were here.'

It was very strange to Joyce. She grew crimson, as old Janet had done, under her father's kiss. He was her father; her heart no longer made any objections; it beat high with a strange mixture of elation and pain. Her father—who had done her mother no conscious wrong, who had proved himself, in that high fantastical way which alone is satisfactory to the visionary soul, to be such

a gentleman as she had always longed to meet with : yet one whom she would have to follow, far from all she knew, and, what was far worse, leaving desolate the old parents who depended upon her for all the brightness in their life. Her other sensations of pain fled away like clouds before the dawn, but this tragic strain remained. How would they do without her?—how could they bear the separation? The causeless resentment, the fanciful resistance which Joyce had felt against her father, vanished in a moment, having no cause ; but the other burden remained.

Meanwhile there was another burden of which she had not thought. Andrew Halliday had discreetly withdrawn himself while the main action of the scene was going on. He stepped aside, and began to talk to Captain Bellendean. It was not undesirable in any circumstances to make friends with Captain Bellendean ; and the schoolmaster had all his wits about him. He took up a position aside, where he could still command a perfect view of what was going on, and then he said, 'We are having very good weather for this time of the year.'

‘Yes,’ Norman said, a little surprised, ‘I think so. It is not very warm, but it is always fine.’

‘Not warm! That will be your Indian experiences, Captain; for we all think here it is a very fine season—the best we have had for years. The corn is looking well, and the farmers are content, which is a thing that does not happen every year.’

‘No, indeed,’ said Norman. He was not very much interested in the farmers, who had not yet begun to be the troublesome members of society they now are; but he did not wish to have his attention distracted from the scene going on so near; and but for innate civility, he would willingly have snubbed the school-master. Andrew, however, was not a person to be suppressed so.

‘You are more interested,’ he said confidentially, ‘in what’s going on here; and so am I, Captain Bellendean. I have reason to be very deeply interested. Everything that concerns my dear Joyce——’

‘Your dear—what?’ cried the Captain abruptly, turning quickly upon him with an indignant air. Then, however, Captain

Bellendean recollected himself. 'I beg your pardon,' he said quickly; 'I believe I have heard—something.'

'You will have heard,' said Halliday, 'that we've been engaged for some time back. We should have been married before now but for some difficulties about—about her parents and mine. Not that there was not perfect satisfaction with the connection,' he added, with his air of importance, 'on both sides of the house.'

'Oh,' said Norman. He felt himself grow red with annoyance at this intrusive fellow, whose affairs were nothing to him. He added with conscious sarcasm, 'Let us hope it will always continue to be equally satisfactory.'

'I hope so,' said Halliday. 'It could scarcely, indeed, be otherwise, seeing that Joyce was my choice in very humble circumstances, when I might well have found a partner in a different sphere. My mother's first word was, "Andrew, you might have done better;" but Joyce's own merits turned the scale. She is an excellent creature, Captain Bellendean, admirable in tuition.'

She raises an enthusiasm in the children, especially the bigger girls, which really requires quite a gift. I looked forward to the day when she should be transferred to my own parish, and work under me. Judicious guidance was all she required—just a hint here, a suggestion there—and there would not be a head-mistress in Scotland to equal her.'

'I fear,' said Norman, smoothing his annoyance into a laugh, 'that Colonel Hayward will put a stop to schoolmistressing.'

'Why, sir, why? it's a noble office. There could not be a finer occupation, nor one in which you can serve your country better. Ladies, indeed, after marriage, when they get the cares of a family, sometimes begin to flag a little,' said Halliday, giving a complacent look at Joyce. 'Of course,' he added, after a pause—and, though he did not know it, he had never been so near being kicked out of a house in his life—'if Colonel Hayward should wish her to settle near him, there are many fine appointments to be had in England. I would not say that I should insist upon remaining here.'

‘That would be kind,’ said Captain Belendean, with a sarcasm which was scarcely intentional. He was confounded by the composure and by the assurance of this fellow, who was so calmly persuaded of his own property in Joyce.

‘I would think it only duty,’ said Halliday; ‘but you’ll excuse me, Captain,—I think I am wanted.’ He turned with a smile towards Joyce, still awed and astonished by the sudden change in her own sentiments, who continued to stand shy and tremulous within her father’s encircling arm.

‘Joyce,’ said Andrew, ‘I am glad to see this happy conclusion; but you have not yet introduced me to the Cornel—and we can have no secrets from him now.’

The Colonel turned with astonishment, and something as like *hauteur* as was possible to his gentle and courteous temper, to the new speaker. He looked him over from head to foot, with a dim recollection of having seen him before, and of having somehow resented his appearance even then. He resented it much more now, when this half-bred person, whose outside was not that of

a gentleman, yet was not that of a labouring man, came forward claiming a place between his daughter and himself. He turned upon Andrew that mild lightning of indignant eyes which had proved so efficacious in the regiment. But Halliday was not to be intimidated by any man's eyes. He drew still nearer with an ingratiating smile, and said again, 'Introduce me to the Cornel, Joyce.'

Joyce had accepted Andrew Halliday's love—as little of it as possible: because he had forced it upon her, because his talk and acquaintance with books had dazzled her, because she had found a certain protection in him from other rustic suitors. She had allowed it to be understood that some time or other she would marry him. He was the nearest to herself in position, in ambition, of any in the country-side. But she lifted her eyes to him now with a shrinking and horror which she herself could not understand. He stood between her and Captain Bellendean, contrasting himself without the smallest reluctance or sense of danger with the man whose outward semblance was more like that

of a hero than any man Joyce had seen. She made in a moment the comparison which it had never occurred to Halliday to make. His under-size, his imperfect development, the absence of natural grace and refinement in him, made themselves apparent to her sharply, as if by the sting of a sudden blow. She gazed at him, the colour again flushing over her face, with a slight start of surprise and something like repugnance. He had got her promise that she would marry him, but she had never promised to present him to her unknown dream-father as his future son.

‘Who is it?’ said Colonel Hayward. He curved his eyebrows over his eyes to assist his vision, which gave him a look of displeasure; and he was displeased to see this man,—a man with whom he had some previous unpleasant association, he could not tell what,—thrusting himself in at such an inappropriate moment between his daughter and himself.

‘It is—Andrew Halliday,’ said Joyce, very low, turning her head away. Halliday held his ground very sturdily, and acknow-

ledged this abrupt description with an ingratiating smile.

‘How do you do, Cornel?’ he said. ‘After all, she’s shy—she leaves me to introduce myself; which is not perhaps to be wondered at. We have been engaged for nearly a year. I came here to-day, knowing nothing, to try and persuade her to name the day, and put an end to a wretched bachelor’s life. But when I arrived I found everything turned upside down, and Joyce quite past giving any heed to me. I hope I may leave my cause in your hand, Cornel,’ said the schoolmaster, with the utmost absence of perception. He thought he had made a very agreeable impression, and that his affairs were, as he said, safe in the Cornel’s hands.

‘You are engaged to this—gentleman?’ Colonel Hayward said.

Joyce felt herself quail as she looked into her father’s face. She read all that was in his at a glance. Colonel Hayward was quite ignorant of Halliday, quite unaccustomed to the kind of man, unprepared for this new claim; and yet his eyes expressed the same

thoughts which were in hers. A little shiver of keen sympathetic feeling ran through her. She felt herself unable to say anything. She assented with a look in which, with horror at herself, she felt the shrinking, the reluctance to acknowledge the truth, the disinclination which she had never allowed even to herself up to this time. The Colonel looked from Joyce, standing with downcast eyes and that half-visible shrinking in every line of her figure and attitude, to the commonplace man with the smirk on his countenance: and breathed once more the habitual aspiration of his life, 'Oh that Elizabeth were here!' But then he remembered that Elizabeth had sent him away to work it out for himself.

'We always knew,' said Halliday, 'that this day would come some time, and that her real origin would be known. I have looked forward to it, Cornel. I have always done my best to help her to prepare—for any position. I am not rich,' he added, with demonstrative frankness; 'but among people of high tone that's but a secondary matter, and I know you'll find we are true partners

and mates, Joyce and myself, in every other way.'

'Sir, I am very much confused with one discovery,' said the Colonel, hesitating and tremulous. 'I—I—can scarcely realise yet about my daughter. Let the other stand over a little—let it wait a little—till I have got accustomed—till I know how things are—till I——'

He looked at Joyce anxiously to help him out. But for the first time in her life Joyce failed in this emergency. She stood with her eyes cast down, slightly drawn back, keeping herself isolated by an instinctive movement. She had never been in such a strait before.

'Oh,' said Halliday, 'I understand. I can enter into your feelings, Cornel; and I am not afraid to wait.' He took Joyce's hand, which hung by her side, and clasped it close. 'Joyce,' he said, 'will speak for me; Joyce will see that I am not put off too long.'

A sudden heat like a flame seemed to envelop Joyce. She withdrew her hand quickly, yet almost stealthily, and turned

upon her father—her father whom she had known only for a few hours, whose claims she had at first rejected—an appealing look. Then Joyce, too, remembered herself. Truth and honour stood by Halliday's side, though he was not of their noble strain. The flame grew hotter and hotter, enveloping her, scorching her, turning from red to the white flames of devouring fire. She turned back to her betrothed lover, scarcely seeing through eyes dazzled by that glare, and put out her hand to him as if forced by some invisible power.

CHAPTER XVI

THE little family party left Bellendean two days after. It was not expedient, they all felt, to linger long over the inevitable separation. Even old Janet was of this mind. 'If it were done when 'tis done, then it were well it were done quickly.' The sentiment of these words was in the old woman's mind, though possibly she did not know them. Joyce was finally taken from her foster-parents when she left them for Bellendean on the evening before, half heart-broken, yet half ecstatic, not knowing how to subdue the extraordinary emotion and excitement that tingled to her very finger-points. She was going to dine at the table which represented everything that was splendid and refined to the village schoolmistress, to be waited on by the servants who thought

themselves much superior to old Peter and Janet, to hear the talk, to make acquaintance with the habits of those whom she had looked up to all her life. The Bellendean carriage came for her, to bring her away not only from the cottage, but from all her past existence—from everything she had known. By Janet's advice, or rather commands, Joyce had put on her one white dress, the soft muslin gown which she had sometimes worn on a summer Sunday, and in which the old people had always thought she looked like a princess. Peter sat by the open door of the cottage while these last preparations were being made. The anger of great wretchedness was blazing in the old man's eyes. 'What are you doing with that white dud?' he said, giving her a glance askance out of his red eyes. 'I aye said it was not fit for a decent lass out of my hoose. Mak her pit on a goon that's like her place, no like thae light-headed limmers.' He waved his hand towards the east end of the village, where there lived an ambitious family with fine daughters. 'Dod! I would tear it off her back.'

‘Haud your tongue,’ said his wife; ‘what good will it do you to fecht and warstle with Providence? The time’s come when we maun just submit. Na, na, never heed him, Joyce. The white’s far the best. And just you step into your carriage, my bonnie lady: it’s the way I’ve aye seen you going aff in my dreams. Peter, dinna sit there like a sulky bear. Give her a kiss and your blessing, and let her go.’

A laugh of hoarse derision burst from Peter’s lips. ‘I’m a bonnie man to kiss a grand lady! I never was ane for thae showings-off. If she maun go, she will hae to go, and there is an end o’t. Farewell to ye, Joyce!’

He got up hastily from his seat at the door. The footman outside and the coachman on the box, keenly observant both, looked on—and Peter knew their fathers and mothers, and was aware that any word he said would be public property next day. He gave himself a shake, and pulled his bonnet over his eyes, but did not stride away as he had done before. He stood leaning his back against the wall, his face half buried in the

old coat-collar which rose to his ears when he bent his head, and in the shadow of his bonnet and the forest of his beard. It was Janet, in her quavering voice, who gave the blessing, putting up two hard hands, and drawing them over Joyce's brown satin hair and soft cheeks: "The Lord bless thee and keep thee: the Lord lift up the light o' His countenance upon thee." Gang away, gang away! It will maybe no' be sæe hard when you're out o' our sight.'

The horses seemed to make but one bound, the air to fill with the sound of hoofs and wheels, and Joyce found herself beginning again to perceive the daylight through her blinding tears. And her heart, too, gave a bound, involuntary, unwilling. It was not so hard when they were out of sight, and the new world so full of expectation, of curiosity, of the unknown, opened before her in a minute. Joyce in her white dress, in the Bellendean carriage driving up the avenue to dinner, with her father waiting at the other end to receive her, was and could be Joyce Matheson no more. All that she knew and was familiar with departed from her like

the rolling up of a map, like the visions of a dream.

There was, however, so much consciousness, so much curiosity, so many comments made upon Joyce and her story, that the strange witching scene of the dinner-table—a thing of enchantment to the girl, with its wonderful flowers and fine company—was for the other guests somewhat embarrassing and uncomfortable. Strangely enough Joyce was almost the only one at table who was unaffected by this feeling. To her there was something symbolical in the novelty which fitted in with all her dreams and hopes. The flowers, the pretty dresses, the glitter and show of the white table with its silver and porcelain, the conversation, a dozen different threads going on at once, the aspect of the smiling faces as they turned to each other,—all carried out her expectations. It seemed to Joyce, sitting almost silent, full of the keenest observation, that the meal, the vulgar eating and drinking, was so small a part of it. She could not hear what everybody was saying, nor was she, in the excitement and confusion of her mind, very capable of under-

standing the rapid interchange of words, so many people talking together; but it represented to her the feast of reason and the flow of soul better than the most brilliant company in the world, more distinctly heard and understood, could have done. She was not disappointed. Joyce knew by the novels she had read that in such circumstances as hers the newcomer full of expectation generally was disappointed, and found that, seen close, the finest company was no better than the humblest. Her imagination had rebelled against that discomfiting discovery even when she read of it; and now it was with great elation that she felt she had been right all through and the novels wrong. She was not disappointed. The food and the eating were quite secondary, as they ought to be. When she looked along the table, it was to see smiling faces raised in pleasure at something that had been said, or saying something with the little triumphant air of successful argument or happy wit, or listening with grave attention, assenting, objecting, as the case might be. She did not know what they were saying, but she was convinced that it

was all beautiful, clever, witty, true conversation, the food for which her spirit had hungered. She had no desire for the moment to enter into it herself. She was dazzled by all the prettiness and brightness, moved to the heart by that sensation of having found what she longed for, and at last obtained entrance into the world to which she truly belonged. She smiled when she met Mrs. Bellendean's eye, and answered slightly at random when she was spoken to. She was by her father's side, and he did not speak to her much. She was kindly left with her impressions, to accustom herself gradually to the new scene. And she was entirely satisfied, elated, afloat in an ethereal atmosphere of contentment and pleasure. Her dreams, she thought, were all realised.

But next morning the old life came back with more force than ever. Joyce went over and over the scene of the evening. 'Gang away, gang away! It will maybe no' be sae hard when you're out o' our sight.' Her foster-parents had thrust her from them, not meaning to see her again; and though her heart was all aching and bleeding, she did

not know what to do, whether to attempt a second parting, whether to be content that the worst was over. She made the compromise which tender-hearted people are so apt to do. She got up very early, following her old habit with a curious sense of its unusualness and unnecessariness—to use two awkward words—and ran down all the way to the village through the dewy grass. But early as she was, she was not early enough for Peter, whom she saw in the distance striding along with his long, heavy tread, his head bowed, his bonnet drawn over his brows, a something of dreary *abandon* about him which went to Joyce's heart. He was going through a field of corn which was already high, and left his head and shoulders alone visible as he trudged away to his work—the sun beating upon the rugged head under its broad blue bonnet, the heavy old shoulders slouched, the long step undulating, making his figure fall and rise almost like a ship at sea. The corn was 'in the flower,' still green, and rustled in the morning air; a few red poppies blazed like a fringe among the sparse stalks near the pathway; the sky

was very clear in the gray blue of northern skies under summer heat ; but ~~the~~ old man, she was sure, saw nothing as he jogged onward heavy-hearted. Joyce dared not call to him, dared not follow him. With a natural pang she stood and watched the old father bereaved going out to his work. Perhaps it would console him a little : she for whom he sorrowed could do so no more.

But Joyce had not the same awe of Janet. Is it perhaps that there is even in the anguish of the affections a certain luxury for a woman which is not for the man ? She ran along the vacant sunny village street, and pushed open the half-closed door, and flung herself upon the old woman's neck, who received her with a shriek of joy. Perhaps it crossed Janet's mind for a moment that her child had come back, that she had discovered already that all these fine folk were not to be listened to ; but the feeling, though ecstatic, was but momentary, and would indeed have been sternly opposed by her own better sense had it been true.

‘Eh, and it's you!’ she cried, seizing Joyce by the shoulders, gazing into her face.

‘It is me, granny. For all you said last night that I was better out of your sight, I could not, I could not go—without seeing you again.’

‘Did I say that?—the Lord forgive me! But it’s just true. I’ll be better when you’re clean gane; but eh! I’m glad, glad. Joyce—my bonnie woman, did you see him?’

‘Oh, granny, I saw him going across the big cornfield. Tell him I stood and watched him with his head down on his breast—but I daredna lift my voice. Tell him Joyce will never forget—the green corn and the hot sun, and him—alone.’

‘What would hinder him to be his lane at six o’clock in the morning?’ said Janet, with a tearful smile. ‘You never gaed wi’ him to his work, ye foolish bairn. If he had left ye sleeping sound in your wee garret, would he have been less his lane? Ay, ay, I ken weel what you mean; I ken what you mean. Well, it just had to be; we maunna complain. Run away, my dawtie: run away, my bonnie lady—ye’ll write when ye get there; but though it’s a hard thing to say,

it'll be the best thing for us a' when you're just clean gane.'

Two or three hours afterwards, Joyce found herself, all the little confusion of the start over, seated in the seclusion of the railway carriage, with the father and mother who were henceforward to dispose of her life.

She had seen very little of them up to this moment. Colonel Hayward, indeed, had kept by her during the evening, patting her softly on her arm from time to time, taking her hand, looking at her with very tender eyes, listening, when she opened her mouth at rare intervals, with the kind of pleased, half-alarmed look with which an anxious parent listens to the utterances of a child. He was very, very kind—more than kind. Joyce had become aware, she could scarcely tell how, that the other people sometimes smiled a little at the Colonel—a discovery which awoke the profoundest indignation in her mind; but she already began half to perceive his little uncertainties, his difficulty in forming his own opinion, the curious helplessness which made it apparent that this distinguished soldier required to be taken

care of, and more or less guided in the way he had to go. But she had done nothing towards making acquaintance with Mrs. Hayward, whose relation to her was so much less distinct, and upon whom so much of her comfort must depend. This lady sat in the corner of the carriage next the window, with her back to the engine, very square and firm—a far more difficult study for her new companion than her husband was. She had not shown by look or word any hostility towards Joyce; but still a sentiment of antagonism had, in some subtle way, risen between them. With the exclusiveness common to English travellers, they had secured the compartment in which they sat for themselves alone; so that the three were here shut for the day in the very closest contact, to shake together as they might. Joyce sat exactly opposite to her stepmother, whilst the Colonel, who had brought in with him a sheaf of newspapers, changed about from side to side as the view, or the locomotion, or his own restlessness required. He distributed his papers to all the party, thrusting a *Graphic* into Joyce's hands, and heaping the remainder upon the

seat. Mrs. Hayward took up the *Scotsman* which he had given her, and looked at it contemptuously. 'What is it?' she said, holding it between her finger and her thumb. 'You know I don't care for anything, Henry, but the *Times* or the *Morning Post*.'

'You can have yesterday's *Times*, my dear,' said the Colonel; 'but you know we are four hundred miles from London. We must be content with the papers of the place. There are all the telegrams just the same—and very clever articles, I hear.'

'Oh, I don't want to read Scotch articles,' said Mrs. Hayward. She meant no harm. She was a little out of temper, out of heart. To say something sharp was a kind of relief to her; she did not think it would hurt any one, nor did she mean to do so. But Joyce grew red behind her *Graphic*. She looked at the pictures with eyes which were hot and dry with the great desire she had to shed the tears which seemed to be gathering in them. Now that Bellendean was left behind like a dream, now that the familiar fields were all out of sight, the village roofs disappeared for

ever, and she, Joyce, not Joyce any longer, nor anything she knew, shut up here as in a strait little house with the people,—the people to whom she belonged,—a wild and secret anguish took possession of her. She sat quite still with the paper held before her face, trying to restrain and subdue herself. She felt that if the train would but stop, she would dart out and fly and lose herself in the crowd; and then she thought, with what seemed to her a new comprehension, of her mother who had done so—who had fled and been lost. Her poor young mother, a girl like herself! This thought, however, calmed Joyce; for if her mother had but been patient, the misery she was at present enduring need never have been. Had the first Joyce but subdued herself and restrained her hasty impulses, the second Joyce might have been a happy daughter, knowing her father and loving him, instead of the unhappy, uneasy creature she was, with her heart and her life torn in two. She paused with a kind of awe when that thought came into her mind. Her mother had entailed upon her the penalty of her hastiness, of her impatience

and passion. She had paid the cost herself, but not all the cost—she had left the rest to be borne by her child. The costs of every foolish thing have to be borne, Joyce said to herself. Some one must drink out that cup to the dregs; it cannot pass away until it has been emptied by one or another. No; however tempting the crowd might be in which she could disappear, however many the stations at which she could escape, she would not take that step. She would not postpone the pang. She would bear it now, however it hurt her; for one time or another it would have to be borne.

The conversation went on all the same, as if none of these thoughts were passing through the troubled brain of Joyce,—and she was conscious of it, acutely yet dully, as if it had been written upon the paper which she held before her face.

‘You must not speak in that tone, my dear, of Scotch articles—before Joyce,’ the Colonel said. ‘I have never found that they liked it, however philosophical they might be——’

‘Does Joyce count herself Scotch?’ Mrs.

Hayward asked, as if speaking from a distance.

‘Do you hear your mother, my dear, asking if you call yourself Scotch?’ he said.

Both Joyce and Mrs. Hayward winced at the name. There was nothing to call for its use, and neither of them intended to pick it up out of the oblivion of the past, or the still more effectual mystery of the might have been, to force it into their lives. But Joyce could not take notice of it: she could only reply to his question with a little exaggerated warmth—‘I have never been out of Scotland, and all I care for has been always there. How could I call myself anything else?’

It was not very long since Peter had accused her of ‘standing up for the English.’ That had been partially true, and so was this. She thought of it with almost a laugh of ridicule at herself. Now she felt Scotch to the tips of her fingers, resenting everything that was said or hinted against her foster-country.

‘I see I must mind my p’s and q’s,’ said Mrs. Hayward; ‘but, fortunately, there will be no means of getting the *Scotsman* in

Richmond, so we shall be exempt from that.'

There was something in Mrs. Hayward's tone which seemed to imply that other subjects of quarrel would not be wanting, and there was a little smile on her lips which gave further meaning to what she said, or seemed to do so; though, as a matter of fact, poor Mrs. Hayward had no meaning at all, but could not, though she tried, get rid of that little bit of temper which had sprung up all lively and keen at sight of the Colonel's solicitude about his daughter and her 'things'—a solicitude which was quite new and unaccustomed, for he was not in the habit of thinking of any one's 'things,' but rather, whenever he could, of losing his own. Among Joyce's small baggage there was one little shabby old-fashioned box—a box which Mrs. Hayward divined at the first glance must contain the little relics of the mother, of itself a pitiful little object enough. There had not been a word said on the subject, but the Colonel had been startled by the sight of it. He had recognised it, or imagined that he recognised it, she said to

herself severely, and had himself seen it put in the van, with a care which he had never taken for anything of hers. It was only a trifle, but it touched one of those chords that are ready to jar in the wayward human instrument of which the best of men and women have so little control. She could not get that jarring chord to be still ; it vibrated all through her, giving an acrid tone to her voice, and something disagreeable to the smile that came, she could not tell how, to her lip. All these vibrations were hateful to her, as well as to the hapless antagonist who noted and divined them with quick responding indignation. But Mrs. Hayward could not help it, any more than she could help Joyce perceiving it. The close vicinity into which this little prison of a railway carriage brought them, so that not a tone or a look could be missed, was intolerable to the elder woman too. But she knew very well that she could not run away.

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